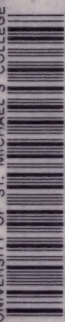
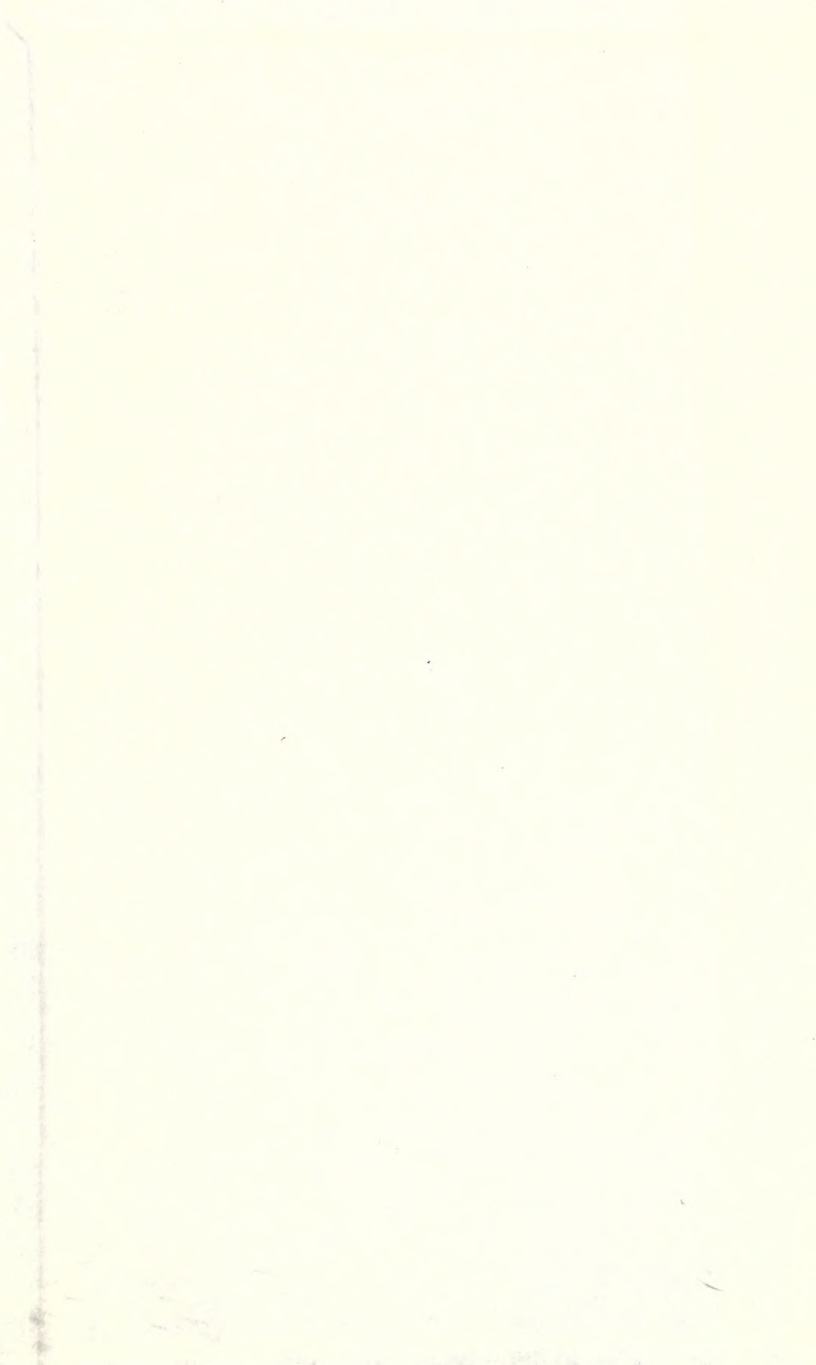


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BENJAMIN  
DISRAELI

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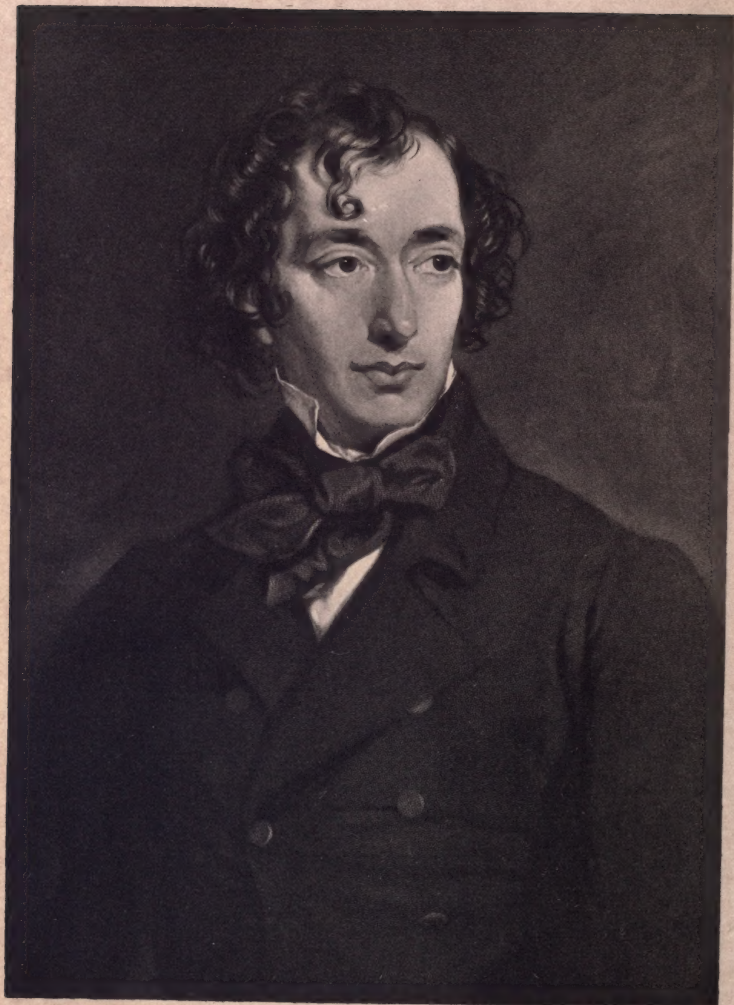
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"The real Disraeli. This is decidedly the most fitting work presented to admirers of Lord Beaconsfield, who have wished for a personal memoir that they could cherish with some permanent pleasure and satisfaction."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"We are able to give almost unreserved praise to Mr. Meynell's captivating volume upon a fascinating, but difficult, subject. His big book is of the deepest interest, almost from the first page to the last. The great value of the work, the picture of Disraeli as a man, is, in fact, the first that we have received. Mr. Meynell's Life will both be appreciated at the moment and lastingly consulted."—*Athenæum*.







*Allen & Co. sc.*

*The Rt. Hon<sup>ble</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.  
After the painting by Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A.*



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# BENJAMIN DISRAELI

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*AN UNCONVENTIONAL  
BIOGRAPHY*    ❧    ❧    ❧

By WILFRID MEYNELL

With 40 Illustrations, including 2 Photo-  
gravure Plates

IN TWO VOLUMES

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# BENJAMIN DISRAELI

## AN UNCONVENTIONAL BIOGRAPHY

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### LETTERS—(*continued*)

#### *A Friendship,—“Dearest Lady Blessington”*

From 1834 until the end of her London career, which was also nearly the end of her life, Disraeli maintained a steady friendship for a lady of fame who was in some sort a leader, if not strictly of society in her own time, certainly a leader much followed by ladies, unconventional as she, who are very much in society to-day.

Lady Blessington was, if not a beauty, a very pretty woman ; and if not a woman of “genius” (as Landor called her to her face), a woman of talent. All allow that she left mediocrity behind her when the quality to be rated was—charm. She attracted ; she was admired by a multitude of men ; and by Disraeli admired and loved as well. Who can doubt it in face of one of these letters ? She had the gift of friendship, little as her narrow and correct epistolary style may

hint at it. These letters and stories seem to make up, in conventionalism, for the violated conventions with which unkind circumstance had associated her early womanhood. In her courage, her industry, her enterprise—not often the virtues of a rich and brilliant woman—she was great. It is this slight anomaly—this combination of manly qualities with luxurious life, with a conspicuously showy *ménage*, and with exceedingly insipid and sentimental literature, that makes Lady Blessington, whichever way the mood takes you, interesting or uninteresting.

She was born in 1779, in Ireland, one of the six children of Edmund Power, a rollicking squire of the time, spirited and needy at his best ; at his worst violent and drunken. This father, on the verge of ruin, gave Marguerite in marriage, in her childhood (she was little more than fifteen), to a half-insane and brutal Captain Farmer, from whom—after three unhappy months—she found courage to part, returning to the minor misery of her father's house. Thence, after three humiliating years, under fear of the return from India of her drunken husband, she departed, placing herself under the protection of Captain Jenkins. Some years later he ceded her to Lord Blessington, who offered a legitimate marriage, then made possible by the death of Captain Farmer. She was not quite thirty when she assumed the name she was to make so ornamental. Her husband had had some public

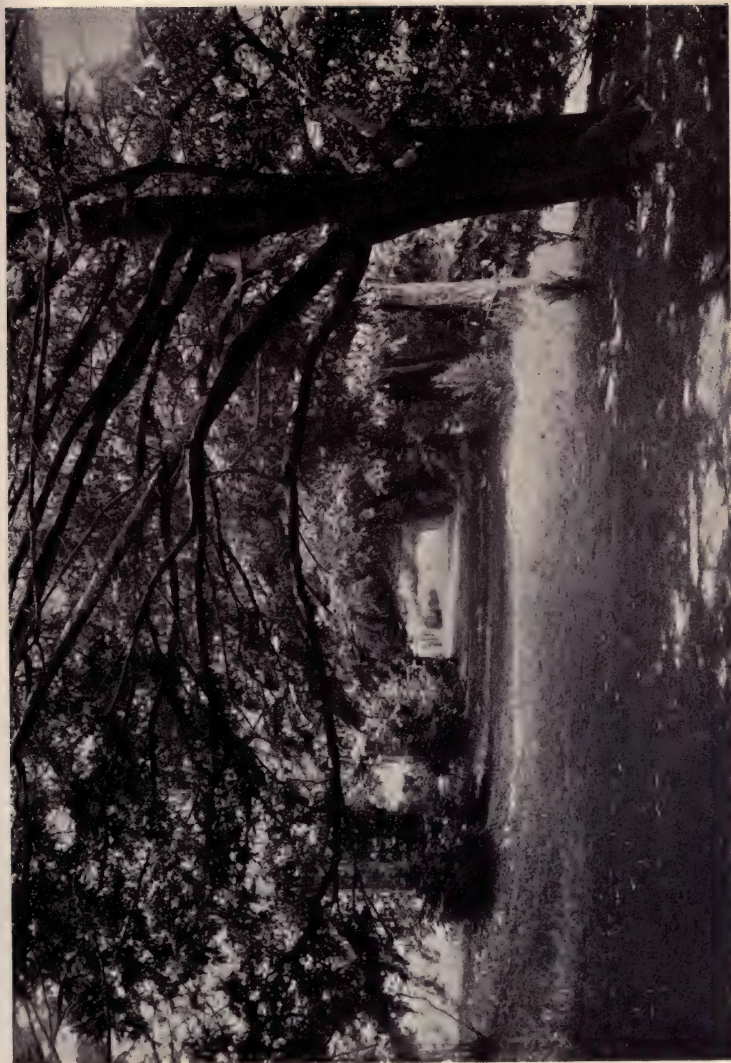
misadventures in regard to a former marriage, and this fact, added to Lady Blessington's past, put their position definitely outside the rather arbitrarily and capriciously placed fence of society.

But her house in St. James's Square was the resort of all the clever and great men from Wellington to Durham, Napoleon (afterwards the Third) to Disraeli. When the Whigs had Holland House for their headquarters, Lord Durham's party foregathered at "that woman's," whom Lady Holland did not "know." Lady Blessington, as a widow, had her solitude enlivened by Count D'Orsay, a man whose brilliant parts are somewhat obscured by his brilliant adornment, and his great talents by his great debts. To him had been given in marriage Lord Blessington's young step-daughter—and with her a great fortune. In this case, strange to say, the fortune lasted longer than the alliance, from which we may judge that the alliance ended almost at once; a Frenchman of the reigning house became the ally of the girl D'Orsay found impossible. D'Orsay himself, in his last and evil days, after Lady Blessington's death, said she had been "a mother" to him—"understand me," he added, speaking to Dickens, "a mother."

At Gore House, Kensington, Lady Blessington made amends to herself for other ills of life by her splendid *salon*, by furniture which must have been in the shocking taste of the time, but was "gorgeous" in the



eyes of a Greek professor and an American printer ; by her carriage ; by her box at the opera ; by her dress ; and, in time, by "literature." Probably her luxuries avenged her on the ladies who did not call—an exterior consolation ; while her novels, and *The Book of Beauty*, and *The Keepsake*—ornamental annuals which she edited—gave her a more real comfort ; for the praises of many people of importance encouraged her to take herself seriously as a Woman of Letters. D'Orsay was grossly extravagant ; Lady Blessington shared his "difficulties," and died much impoverished and down-fallen, in Paris, in 1849. The exile guest of Gore House in old times, become Prince President of the Republic, did not give her a grateful welcome to his future capital. He had been a puzzle in the drawing-room of Gore House—"a deep man," said some, "a stupid man," said others, a romantic or a vulgar conspirator, or perhaps both. Disraeli had thought he would never visit Paris again, but now he had a new inducement, he told her, faithful to the end to the "Lady of Gore House," to whom the tenderest passage of any letter of his yet published was addressed, and to whom, at once after his marriage, he paid the respect of making her acquainted with his wife. The following letters may be conveniently grouped together here.



*Photo by H. W. Taunt & Co., Oxford.*

THE YEW-TREE WALK, BRADENHAM.

A favourite walk of Disraeli while writing *Sybil*.





“*The great object of human legislation, that people should never be happy together.*”

“BRADENHAM,

“*August 5th, 1834.*”

“I was so sorry to leave London without being a moment alone with you ; but although I came to the opera the last night on purpose, Fate was against us. I did not reach this place until Sunday, very ill indeed from the pangs of parting. Indeed, I feel as desolate as a ghost, and I do not think that I ever shall be able to settle to anything again. It is a great shame, when people are happy together, that they should be ever separated ; but it seems the great object of all human legislation that people should never be happy together.

“My father I find better than I expected, and much cheered by my presence. I delivered him all your kind messages. He is now very busy on his *History of English Literature*, in which he is far advanced. I am mistaken if you will not delight in these volumes. They are full of new views of the history of our language, and indeed of our country, for the history of a State is necessarily mixed up with the history of its literature.

“For myself, I am doing nothing. The western breeze favours an *al fresco* existence, and I am seated with a pipe under a spreading sycamore, solemn as a pacha. I wish you would induce Hookham to entrust me with *Agathon*, that mad

Byronic novel. What do you think of the modern French novelists, and is it worth my while to read them, and if so, what do you recommend me? What of Balzac? Is he better than Sue and Hugo? I ask you these questions because you will give me short answers, like all people who are masters of their subject.

"I suppose it is vain to hope to see my dear D'Orsay here; I wish indeed he would come. Here is a cook by no means contemptible. He can bring his horses if he like, but I can mount him. Adieu, dear Lady Blessington; some day I will try to write you a more amusing letter; at present I am in truth ill and sad."

\*\*\*

*"A horror of writing."*

[BRADENHAM, 1834.]

"DEAREST LADY BLESSINGTON,—I have intended to return the books and send you these few lines every day, and I am surprised that I could have so long omitted doing anything as writing to you. We are all delighted with the portraits; my sister is collecting those of all my father's friends; her collection will include almost every person of literary celebrity from the end of the Johnsonian era, so your fair face arrived just in time. I am particularly delighted with Parris's portrait, which I had never seen before.

"I have read the article on Coleridge in the

*Quarterly*, but do not agree with you in holding it to be written by Lockhart. It is too good. L.'s style has certainly the merit of being peculiar. I know none so meagre, harsh, and clumsy, or more felicitous in the jumble of commonplace metaphors. I think the present reviewal must be by Nelson Coleridge, a nephew of the poet and a cleverish sort of fellow, though a prig.

“You give me the same advice as my father ever has done about dotting down the evanescent feelings of youth : but like other excellent advice, I fear it will prove unprofitable. I have a horror of journalising, and indeed of writing of all description. With me execution is ever a labour and conception a delight. Although a great traveller, I never kept a diary in my life.”

His letters home very happily serve as such over a particularly interesting period.

\*\*\*

“*I am never well, save in action.*”

[BRADENHAM, *October 17th*, 1834.]

“MY DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,—My absence at quarter sessions, where I was bored to death, prevented me instantly answering your letter. I hope, however, you will receive this before your departure. I sympathise with your sufferings ; my experience unhappily assures me how ably you describe them. This golden autumn ought to have cured us all. I myself, in spite of the sunshine,

have been a great invalid. Indeed, I know not how it is, but I am never well, save in action, and then I feel immortal. I am ashamed of being 'nervous.' Dyspepsia always makes me wish for a civil war. In the meantime, I amuse myself by county politics.

"I received yesterday a letter, most spritely and amusing, from Bulwer, dated Limerick. He is about to return to Dublin, and talks of going to Spain.

"I am ashamed that I must confess to him that I have not read *Pompeii*, but alas ! a London bookseller treats us provincials with great contempt, and in spite of reiterated epistles, and promises as numerous, I have not yet received the much-wished tomes. My father sends his kindest regards. As for myself, I am dying for action, and rust like a Damascus sabre in the sheath of a poltroon.

"Adieu ! dear friend ; we shall meet on your return.

"D."

\*\*\*

*Carlton Club Candidature.*

[February, 1836.]

"MY DEAREST LADY,—Early in March there are to be fifty members elected into the Carlton by the members at large. A strong party of my friends, Lord L., Lord Chandos, Stuart de Rothesay, etc., are very active in my behalf, and I think among the leaders of our party my claims will be recognised ; but doubtless there is a sufficient alloy



of dunces even among the Conservatives, and I have no doubt there will be a stout opposition to me. Although I will not canvass myself, I wish my friends to do so *most earnestly*. I know from personal experience that one word from you would have more effect upon me than letters from all the lords in Xdom. I wish therefore to enlist you on my side, and will take the liberty of sending you a list to-morrow."

Writing a month later to his sister, Disraeli was able to say :

"I carried the Carlton ; the opposition was not inconsiderable in the Committee, but my friends were firm. Four hundred candidates, and all, in their own opinion, with equal claims !"

\*\*\*

"*My friends, if I have any.*"

[BRADENHAM, *Spring*, 1837.]

"MY DEAR LADY,—Although it is little more than a fortnight since I quitted your truly friendly and hospitable roof, both of which I shall always remember with deep and lively gratitude, it seems to me at least a far more awful interval of time. I have waited for a serene hour to tell you of my doings ; but serene hours are rare, and therefore I will not be deluded into waiting any longer. In spite of every obstacle in the shape of harassed feelings and other disagreeable accidents of life,

I have not forgotten the fair *Venetia*, who has grown under my paternal care, and has much increased in grace, I hope, as in stature, or rather dimensions. She is truly like her prototype,

The child of love, though born in bitterness  
And nurtured in convulsion;

but I hope she will prove a source of consolation to her parent, and also to her godmother, for I consider you to stand in that relation to her. I do not think that you will find any golden hint of our musing strolls has been thrown away upon me; and I should not be surprised if, in six weeks, she may ring the bell at your hall door, and request admittance, where I know she will find at least one sympathising friend.

"I have of course no news from this extreme solitude. My father advances valiantly with his great enterprise,<sup>1</sup> but works of that calibre are hewn out of a granite with slow and elaborate strokes. Mine are but plaster-of-Paris casts, or rather statues of snow that melt as soon as they are fashioned.

"D'Orsay has written me kind letters, which always enspirited me. How are my friends, if I have any? At any rate, how is Bulwer? I can scarcely expect you to find time to write to me, but I need

<sup>1</sup> Advanced age and the failure of sight prevented Isaac Disraeli from carrying out his scheme for a history of English authorship. The *Amenities of Literature* was a fragment of the larger work he had designed. Sending a copy to Bulwer, he said: "I remain in darkness and I regret to say that my philosophy does not equal my misfortune."

not say what pleasure your handwriting would afford me, not merely in pencilled notes in a chance volume. This is all very stupid, but I could not be quite silent.

“Ever your Dis.”

The Byronic lines quoted in the letter appeared on the title-page when Colburn brought out “*Venetia : By the Author of Henrietta Temple*” that year. With Byron as Cadurcis and Shelley as Marmion Herbert—the common allotment—readers must allow for something of a jumble between the two characters. Daily details of the poet who carried through Europe “the pageant of his bleeding heart,” and prattled about the names of his washerwomen during the progress, were very common property; but, for his delineation of Shelley, Disraeli found access to what were then by-ways of information. Dr. Richard Garnett, who records this, adds the *obiter dictum* that Shelley, had he lived, would have found Theodora in *Lothair* his favourite heroine of modern fiction.

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“*That mighty hoax—the world.*”

[From BRADENHAM HOUSE, towards the close of 1837.]

“I see by the papers that you have quitted the shores of the ‘far-resounding sea,’ and resumed your place in the most charming of modern houses. I therefore venture to recall my existence to your memory, and request the favour of hearing some



intelligence of yourself, which must always interest me. Have you been well, happy, and prosperous? And has that pen, plucked assuredly from the pinion of a bird-of-Paradise, been idle or creative? My lot has been as usual here, though enlivened by the presence of Lady Sykes, who has contrived to pay us two visits, and the presence of Lord Lyndhurst, who also gave us a fortnight of his delightful society.

"I am tolerably busy, and hope to give a good account of myself and doings when we meet, which I trust will be soon. How goes that 'great lubber,' the Public, and how fares that mighty hoax, the World? Who of our friends has distinguished or extinguished himself or herself? In short, as the hart for the waterside, I pant for a little news, but chiefly of your fair and agreeable self.

"*The Book of Beauty* will soon, I fancy, charm the public with its presence. Where have you been? in Hampshire I heard from Lord L——. How is the most delightful of men and best of friends, the Admirable Crichton? I don't mean Willis, who, I see, has married, a fortune I suppose, though it doth not sound like one. How and where is Bulwer? How are the Whigs and how do they feel? All who know you send kind greetings, and all who have not that delight, kind wishes. Peace be within your walls and plenteousness within your palace. *Vale!* Yours affectionately,  
"DIS."

*Memories of Travel Mitigate  
Parliamentary Imprisonment*

*To Lady Blessington.*

[1838.]

“MY DEAR LADY,—I should be mortified if *The Book of Beauty* appeared without my contribution, however trifling. I have something on the stocks for you, but it is too elaborate to finish well in the present tone of my mind ; but if you like a Syrian sketch of four or five pages, you shall have it in two or three days.”

If this “Syrian sketch ” occupied for “two or three days” the pen of Disraeli, which, at normal times, flowed so freely, either those days must have been disturbed ones or “the present tone of my mind” been unfavourable to composition. He was in Parliament ; but he had debts ; and the death of his helpful colleague, Mr. Wyndham Lewis, in March, 1838, gave him present anxieties. Following these, before haven was reached, were the perturbations of “impending matrimony.” The mood may be indexed by two little incidents of the June of that year, when his brother Ralph’s kindness supplied the Court suit which enabled him to see the Coronation, and when the gold medal which he got as a member of Parliament was presented at once to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis. In any case, it must have been a little solace to him to recur in memory to the orange and lemon groves about

Jaffa ("that agreeable town"!), of the Turk who there smoked his nargilly, read Arabian poetry, knelt Mecca-wards at sunset, and, in Disraeli's favour, married gracious speech with gracious act.



**"Our Dearest D'Orsay"**

The "Admirable Crichton" of the last note enlivened Bradenham more than once with his presence :

[1839.]

"We send back our dearest D'Orsay<sup>1</sup> with some of the booty of yesterday's sport as our homage to you. His visit has been very short but very charming, and everybody here loves him as much as you and I do."



**"The Lady of Gore House"**

Shortly before his marriage, in August, 1839, Disraeli gave to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis—a great admirer, he says, of aphoristic writing—Lady Blessington's then new book, *Desultory Thoughts and Reflections*. The recipient was to mark what she approved. Says the giver :

"The volume is in consequence lying on her table with scarcely a margin not deeply scored."

<sup>1</sup> After some sport at Bradenham.

The copy given was a presentation one sent by the author to Disraeli, who adds :

“I should have written to thank you for this agreeable recollection of me, but have intended every day to do so in person.”

\*\*\*

“It is indeed a long time since we met, but I flatter and console myself that we shall meet very soon and very often. But in truth, with a gouty parent and impending matrimony, the House of Commons, and the mechanical duties of society, the last two months have been terribly monopolised : but I can assure you that a day seldom passes that I do not think or speak of you, and I hope I shall always be allowed by you to count the Lady of Gore House among my dearest and most valued friends. D'Orsay was charming yesterday.”

\*\*\*

To the same friend he wrote, a few weeks after his marriage :

“I remember your kind wish that we should meet before our departure, and if not inconvenient to you I would propose calling at Gore House to-morrow with my dear Mary Anne, who, I am sure, will be delighted by finding herself under a roof that has proved to me at all times so hospitable and devoted. I hope that his engagements will not



prevent our meeting our friend Alfred, for I hardly suppose we shall have another opportunity of being together for some time. I should imagine about three would not be unsuitable to you."



*"Change Revives the Sense of Existence"*

[April, 1849.]

"We returned to town on the 16th, and a few days after I called at Gore House, but you were gone. It was a pang; for though absorbing duties of my life have prevented me of late from passing as much time under that roof as it was once my happiness and good fortune through your kindness to do, you are well assured that my heart never changed for an instant to its inmates, and that I invariably entertained for them the same interest and affection.

"Had I been aware of your intentions, I would have come up to town earlier, and especially to have said 'adieu'—mournful as that is.

"I thought I should never pay another visit to Paris, but I have now an object in doing so. All the world here will miss you very much, and the charm with which you invested existence; but for your own happiness, I am persuaded you have acted wisely. Every now and then in this life we require a great change; it wonderfully revives the sense of existence. I envy you; pray, if possible, let me sometimes hear from you."

“Uncle G——”

“So much for ‘the maddest of all acts’ and my Uncle G——’s prescience!”—*Home Letter*, 1837.

Disraeli must be forgiven if, for once in his life, he made a remark of the “I told you so” kinship; for the occasion was that of his first return to Parliament—Maidstone, 1837. More about “Uncle G——” may be gleaned from the following domestic revelation made by Sir Vincent Caillard, whose grandmother (a Basevi) was Lord Beaconsfield’s cousin :

“When young Benjamin Disraeli started on his political career, he was, it is no secret, hard pressed for want of means. He applied to his uncle, Mr. George Basevi, who thereupon took counsel with his son, Benjamin Disraeli’s first cousin, Nathaniel Basevi, an eminent conveyancing barrister. Neither uncle nor cousin had any sympathy for the flighty schemes, as they thought, of an ambitious dreamer. Poor Benjamin had no security to offer but his boundless confidence in himself, and he met with a point-blank refusal. This he would not at first accept. He continued eloquently to plead his cause, and making no impression, he finally lost his temper, and told the Basevis very pointedly what he thought of them. They, on the other hand, told him in return, for what they hoped would be his good, what *they* thought of *him*, and in the course of their exposition treated him

to the name of 'adventurer,' which pleased them so much that the definition stuck in their minds, and became to them a solid truth. Many years afterwards, when the uncle was dead and the cousin, Mr. Nathaniel Basevi, had withdrawn from practice and settled in Torquay, Mr. Disraeli, who had then already been once Prime Minister, happened to visit the watering-place. It was strongly suggested to Mr. Basevi that, Disraeli having now won his spurs, the old ill-feeling should be forgotten, and that he should become reconciled with his successful cousin. He was even given to understand that Mr. Disraeli would be not only ready, but glad, to meet him half-way. But the sturdy and obstinate old gentleman would have none of it. He stuck to it that 'Dizzy' was nothing but a political adventurer, and with such a man, said he, he would have nothing to do; he would neither call upon him nor be called upon.

"Years after that affair, not long after the Congress of Berlin and the return of Lord Beaconsfield to England with 'Peace with honour' in his hand, I was staying with my great-aunt, Mrs. Wing, sister of my grandmother and of Mr. George Basevi before mentioned, who was then eighty-two, and she showed me with much pride a letter she had received from her great cousin. For all that long lifetime she had taken her brother's part; but, she told me, 'Now Ben has done a really great thing, and shown that



he had more in him than we any of us thought, so when he came back from Berlin I thought I would just write him a line of congratulation ; and here is his answer ! ' It was an altogether charming letter, beginning ' My dear cousin,' relating the pleasure of the Prime Minister at the old lady's having remembered him, and his gratification at his success at Berlin, and, if I remember rightly, inquiring after certain members of the family. I am only sorry that my recollection of the terms of the letter is so meagre, though I am certain of its purport. Mrs. Wing has long since died, and what became of the letter I know not. But I hope that it may be preserved somewhere."



### ***Law-Maker : Law-Breaker***

Disraeli had no liking for lawyers as a class, though among them he found fast friends—Benjamin Austen, solicitor, and Lyndhurst, Lord Chancellor, the most helpful he had in early life, and Philip Rose, faithful to the last. Not improbably the uncongenial drudgery his turbulent teens endured at the desk of his father's lawyers sowed the prejudice against all that appertains to John Doe and Richard Roe ; and, later, the entry of his name at Lincoln's Inn, where he kept several terms, since it led to nothing, not even to his being "called," must rank among the failures of one to

whom failure was "hell," the hell of an opportunity once lost and therefore lost for ever—"eternal loss." Perhaps, too, the cold eye turned upon his early—and, indeed, his later—ambitions by his uncle, George Basevi, of the Parliamentary Bar, gave increase to his dislike. He had no doubt his own abandonment of the "learned profession," as its professors call it, in his mind, and was not innocent of a fling at his uncle, when he wrote in *Vivian Grey*: "The Bar—pooh! Law and bad jokes till we are forty; and then, with the most brilliant success, the prospect of gout and a coronet." An early acquaintance formed during his stay at Gibraltar in 1830 afforded him another expression of spleen. "The Judge-Advocate," he said, "is that Mr. Baron Field who once wrote a book, and whom all the world took for a noble; but it turned out that Baron was to him what Thomas is to other men. I found him a bore and vulgar; a Storks without breeding; consequently I gave him a lecture on caves which made him stare, and he has avoided me ever since." Then he refers to a *compagnon de voyage* who, though blind, deaf, and dumb, was yet "more endurable than the noisy, obtrusive jargonic judge, who"—says he, going from the particular to the general—"is a true lawyer, ever illustrating the obvious, explaining the evident, and expatiating on the commonplace."

But the Bar of England was not aware of this

indictment when, in 1838, Disraeli entered upon an encounter with it, and delivered a speech, in the matter of it as well as in the circumstances of its delivery, one of the most remarkable he ever made. He was vanquished then ; but that he had every claim to victory will henceforth be the verdict of the great jury of his fellow-countrymen. Disraeli had successfully contested Maidstone together with Mr. Wyndham Lewis in the July of 1837. Talk among the beaten party about a petition followed ; but Disraeli knew better. He bade his sister clear her head of "all nonsense" about petitions. "There is not a safer seat in England than mine. They have not a shadow to work on." The event was as good as Disraeli's word ; no petition was filed. A little later, the death of Mr. Wyndham Lewis caused a vacancy at Maidstone, for which Mr. Fector offered himself, was selected, but retired on a petition. Mr. Disraeli had no responsibility for this election ; but his name, according to report, was dragged in by Mr. Austin,<sup>1</sup> the leading counsel

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Charles Austin, of Brandeston Hall, Suffolk, who became in due course Q.C., J.P., chairman of Quarter Sessions, a Bencher of the Middle Temple, and leader of the Parliamentary Bar, died in December, 1874, aged seventy-five. He was the son of Mr. Jonathan Austin, of Ipswich, and married, in 1856, Harriet Jane, daughter of Captain Ralph Mitford Preston Ingilby, brother of Sir Henry John Ingilby, Bart., of Ripley. He had two more lasting distinctions—he lived to see the young Parliamentarian whom he arraigned Prime Minister of England ; and he shook the hand of Edward FitzGerald, the hand that did the *Rubáiyát*.



against Mr. Fector. In the following letter Mr. Disraeli joined issue with Mr. Austin :

“ MAIDSTONE ELECTION COMMITTEE.

“ *To the Editor of the ‘ Morning Post.’*

“ CARLTON CLUB,

“ *June 5th* [1838].

“ SIR,—In opening the case of the petitioners against the return of Mr. Fector for Maidstone, on Friday last, Mr. Austin stated, that ‘ Mr. Disraeli, at the general election, had entered into engagements with the electors of Maidstone, and made pecuniary promises to them, which he had left unfulfilled.’

“ I should have instantly noticed this assertion of the learned gentleman, had not a friend, to whose opinion I was bound to defer, assured me that Mr. Austin, by the custom of his profession, was authorised to make any statement from his brief which he was prepared to substantiate or to attempt to substantiate.

“ The inquiry into the last Maidstone election has now terminated, and I take the earliest opportunity of declaring, and in a manner the most unqualified and unequivocal, that the statement of the learned gentleman is utterly false. There is not the slightest shadow of a foundation for it. I myself never either directly or indirectly entered into any pecuniary engagements with, or made any pecuniary promises to, the electors of Maidstone; and, therefore, I cannot have broken any or left any unfulfilled. The whole expenses of the contest in question were



defrayed by my lamented colleague, and I discharged to him my moiety of those expenses, as is well known to those who are entitled to any knowledge on the subject.

"Sir, I am informed that it is quite useless, and even unreasonable, in me to expect from Mr. Austin any satisfaction for those impertinent calumnies, because Mr. Austin is a member of an honourable profession, the first principle of whose practice appears to be that they may say anything provided they be paid for it. The privilege of circulating falsehood with impunity is delicately described as doing your duty towards your client, which appears to be a very different process to doing your duty towards your neighbour.

"This may be the usage of Mr. Austin's profession, and it may be the custom of society to submit to its practice, but for my part, it appears to me to be nothing better than a disgusting and intolerable tyranny, and I, for one, shall not bow to it in silence.

"I, therefore, repeat that the statement of Mr. Austin was false, and inasmuch as he never attempted to substantiate it, I conclude that it was, on his side, but the blustering artifice of a rhetorical hireling, availing himself of the vile license of a loose-tongued<sup>1</sup> lawyer, not only to make a statement which was

<sup>1</sup> Haply it was the alliterative affinity of "law" and "loose" that caused the same words to reappear in conjunction in the last reference he made to lawyers, nearly half a century later: "All lawyers are loose in their youth," says Bertie Tremaine in *Endymion*.

false, but to make it with a consciousness of its falsehood.

“I am, sir, your obedient and faithful servant,

“B. DISRAELI.”

Then all Lincoln's Inn took counsel together. Here, indeed, was a slur cast upon the profession that—alone among professions—continually proclaimed itself “honourable,” its members (until Mr. Justice Grantham became an exception to prove the rule) perpetually congratulating one another in public on their own extraordinary rectitude and dignity, their wisdom and their purity. Lacking public appreciation, they could at least punish public depreciation when, as now, it came in the unwary guise of a technical contempt of court. For this Disraeli was indicted. One notes that he could have outmatched them all by going down to the House of Commons, where even a very young member will enlist sympathy on a question of Privilege. He could have treated Mr. Austin's reported speech as a Breach of the Privilege of the House ; called Austin to *its* Bar ; filled Austin's rebellious yet apparently acquiescing ears (what a different world it would be, were ears automatically and truly expressive!) with pompous periods from the Speaker about the glories and virtues of the Commons. For the Commons and the lawyers, talking collectively, are pretty well equals in self-adulation.

Disraeli, however, dropped the conventional Parliament-man and appeared as only himself, in the now almost forgotten case of "The Queen *v.* Disraeli." The Queen was as young a Queen as he a legislator ; it was the first time that he saw together the two names that in after years no *versus* should disjoin. The defendant Disraeli had no course but to plead guilty, and to appear in person to pray the judgment of the Court. The affidavits were duly read, and the Attorney-General rose to discharge what he, of course, called his "duty" in this, equally of course, "very painful case." A painter or an author fulfils his commission without an allusion to his "duty" : the one to his patron, the other to his publishers—he does it honestly. Doctors apply their skill with a humanity that loses nothing by its silence ; while the gardener or the groom who protests his "duty" instead of speaking of his employment or his job would excite his master's suspicion. When barristers follow suit and talk of retainers or instructions, the Law Courts will be reclaimed for candour.

Disraeli disliked what he termed the "jargonic" tongue of "the gentlemen of the long robe" ; he disliked it then, and he disliked it later when he listened, in another place, to Attorneys-General of his own appointing ; to all the greedy "silk"-worms who go to the House of Commons for the green meat they can get : they come ; they are fed ; they go ;



they are forgotten. But the Attorney-General of 1838—the future Lord Chancellor Campbell—is the one Disraeli now hears mouthing the inevitable word that men misuse in the Law Courts, though they are to wander westward past the monument of Nelson : “Mr. Austin has done nothing more than his duty to his client strictly required him to do.”

What seems more to the point for the reader to-day, Mr. Austin had really never used the words that were imputed to him. So said the Attorney-General, Sir J. (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Campbell ; who, moreover, showed his elevation of feeling by complimenting the offender in that “jargon” of the profession Disraeli had disdainfully docketed. “It gives me most sincere [jargonic] regret to see a gentleman of the [jargonic] respectability and talent of Mr. Disraeli standing on the floor of the court to receive the sentence of your [jargonic] lordships.” Again : “I think he would not have done anything inconsistent with that high character for honour which he has ever borne if he had without hesitation expressed regret for the letter he had written.” The attorney could not have been more civil had he foreseen in the hapless defendant the future dispenser of the Woolsack. No doubt it was public policy to let the criminal off lightly, so that the crime was admitted ; for public opinion was not unmindful of the issue raised. Sir F. Pollock



and Sir. W. Follett, both of whom held the office of Attorney-General in the ensuing Tory Administration, were ranged with the Attorney-General—a formidable array against a layman ; but they modestly refrained from offering any observations. Then Mr. Disraeli, environed, and with nothing to do but submit to the foregone conclusion, made perforce his Galileo-like submission :

“I will for a short time avail myself of the permission of the Bench to offer some observations which may induce it to visit this misdemeanour in a spirit of leniency. I stand before the Court confessedly guilty, not from any dislike to enter into an investigation of the circumstances which have induced me to commit this trespass, but because I have been advised that, whatever the moral effect might be, the legal effect could be but one—namely, a conviction. I thought that, under all these circumstances, it would not be decorous by a prolonged litigation to resist the unquestionable result, nor was I anxious to deprive my honourable, my learned antagonist of an earlier termination of the impending issue. It would be affectation in me to pretend that the (I will say, unfortunate) letter which has originated these proceedings was written for the atmosphere of Westminster Hall, but I believe if the data of the supposed facts upon which this letter has been published had been correct, my offence by the law

would have been the same. Yet, under these circumstances, I should have applied with some confidence to your lordships—not as administrators of the law, but as members of the great social body—to look upon that transgression not only with mercy, but with special indulgence; and it is my wish to place the feelings and circumstances that induced me to write the letter before the Court, that I prevail on your lordships even now to look at my offence in the same spirit.

“The learned Attorney-General has stated that this misconception arose from a report in a public newspaper—in a report of a speech alleged to have been delivered before a Parliamentary tribunal. That report had contained allegations against my character and conduct of no common severity. I was accused of having bribed the constituency whom it was my honour to represent, and afterwards having left unfulfilled the promise by which I had induced them to give me their suffrages. This accusation was of a most grievous character—an accusation of public corruption and private dishonesty—and I hope your lordships will for a moment consider the feelings of a man not very old and experienced in public life, when he found an accusation of this kind made by a learned member of the Bar before a public tribunal of the country; and although I had not immediately adopted the authenticity of that report, yet I submit that though it was possible the insult might not

have been intended, the injury had already been experienced, for the report appeared in the evening papers, appeared the next morning in the morning papers, and had been copied into perhaps every provincial paper throughout the kingdom. I confess my feelings at that moment were considerably excited. I had lived to learn by experience that calumny once circulated is more or less for ever current. You might explain the misapprehension and you might convict the falsehood, but there is indeed an immortal spirit in mendacity which at times is most difficult to cope with, and most dangerous to meet ; and I confess when I adverted to the serious injury I had already experienced, and observing also that there were no characteristics which might induce me to doubt the authenticity of the report, I felt myself writhing under feelings which I regret to remember.

“But I did not commit an act of such rash precipitancy as to write a libel upon a newspaper report. I took steps to ascertain its accuracy or inaccuracy ; I applied to a member of that tribunal before which the speech had been delivered. I found him rather a reluctant communicant, but he explicitly declared that the report was accurate. Under those circumstances I happened to meet an eminent member of the Bar, and one well versed in proceedings before the House of Commons. I mentioned to him the grievance under which I laboured, and the absolute necessity of my taking



some steps to put a termination to the matter ; and I had parted with the, I confessed, unfortunate impression that any application to a member of the Bar would be fruitless ; and indeed, if he desired to give me any satisfaction, it could not be applied for until I had given him an opportunity of proving the accusation he had made. I had waited in consequence, although it was more due to my constituents than to myself that some immediate steps should be taken—I waited until the proceedings terminated—as I subsequently learnt, abruptly terminated ; but in the interval I had spoken without reserve to those who attended committees, that it might reach the ears of the learned gentleman, and I regret to think it had not produced some explanation which would have rendered the step I had afterwards taken unnecessary. When I found those proceedings had terminated, and when I felt that during the delay the accusation had rendered me unfit for a seat in the House of Commons, and unworthy of any position in society—that the attack had been circulated in every possible way throughout the Empire—I found it necessary to take a step which should cope with the calumny, and which should be decisive.

“Two courses alone were open to me. I might have gone down to my seat in the House of Commons, and might have treated it as a breach of privilege. I might have made the observations



I afterwards wrote, and, as your lordships know, I might have done so there with impunity ; but I had a wish not to shield myself under my privilege. Late at night I wrote this unfortunate letter, and sent it instantly to all the newspapers. The Attorney-General seemed to think this an aggravation, but your lordships would not have had me publish a libel in only one paper, which the party might not read, and might only hear of the libel from others. I had thought the better mode was to publish it in all, that it should be made public by every means.

“I am not here to defend the language of that letter as regards any individuals or bodies who may be referred to in that composition, but I mention the haste with which the article was published, because there is a common impression that everything that appears in print is necessarily composed with the advantage of great reflection, and even of revision ; but I will venture to repeat, that a public journalist writes under the same feelings, and subject to the same feelings, as persons addressing popular assemblies, and often regrets in the morning what he has committed to paper the previous night. I have not the slightest wish to vindicate the language of that letter, even to save myself from the perils and punishments that may now await me. I did not consider that the system of bribery spoken of by Mr. Austin prevailed in any borough, certainly it did not in Maidstone. I did not mean to say

that when a new election takes place there, all parties might consider themselves properly remunerated for their labour. If a man had the purse of Croesus and the primitive liberality of Timon, there must be some persons dissatisfied ; but there is a very important point to which I will call your lordships' attention : admitting there was such a system—I mean no reflection on the learned gentleman, but I must say the introduction of my name was most grievous and most unwarranted."

Mr. Disraeli then stated the circumstance of the Maidstone election, and proceeded :

"After I had found I had written a letter, probably too violent even if the supposed attack had been made, and one which was not warranted by the words that were used, I took every step that a man of honour—that a man who wished not only to be just, but most generous—could adopt. I can only say that from the time your lordships graciously threw out your suggestion, anxious as I am at all times not to seem to avoid the consequences of my conduct, wise or unwise, right or wrong, I have done everything in my power to accomplish that suggestion. I appeared against the rule of my counsel, and intimated my intention to two distinguished members of the Bar, one of whom was the honourable member for Liverpool. My

learned counsel did not come into the court with his hands tied. I had given him no limitation as to what was proper to be done, except his own conscience. I had told him to act for me as for himself, knowing that he would not put me in a false position, and my honourable friend had said on that occasion everything which he thought a gentleman should say, or that another gentleman should have expected. He might have been unfortunate in the result, and might not have conveyed all that he had intended, or all that he wished, but I am sure my friend had wished to convey all that I wish to convey now, and he did not do it in a niggard spirit.

“It is enough that I have injured a gentleman who was unknown to me, it is enough that I have outraged his feelings and treated him with injustice, but I hope not with injury. I regret what I have done. I not only regret, but feel great mortification for what I have done. I am sorry I should have injured the feelings of any man who had not attempted to injure me. I am sorry that, through misconception, I should have said anything that could for a moment have annoyed the mind of a gentleman of the highest honour and integrity. I should myself be satisfied with that expression of deep regret and mortification. But, my lords, from the manner in which this declaration is couched, from several expressions that have fallen at various times during these proceedings, from the animus which



has characterised them within and without these walls, I cannot help fearing that I am brought here by one of those fictions of law of which I have read, and it is not so much for an offence against the law as an offence against lawyers that I am now awaiting judgment. My lords, under those circumstances I shall appeal with confidence to the Bench for protection. I am sure, my lords, you will never allow me to be formally arraigned for one offence, and virtually punished for another. My lords, I am not desirous of vindicating the expressions used in that letter in reference to the profession, any more than the expressions used in reference to the individual. My lords, I thought the profession had attacked me, and I wished to show them that there might be a blot in their escutcheon. I have no hesitation in saying that my opinion of the Bar of England in my cooler moments cannot be very different from that of any man of sense and study. I must, of course, recognise it as a very important portion of the social commonwealth—one, indeed, of the lustiest limbs of the body politic ; I know, my lords, to arrive at eminence in that profession requires, if not the highest, many of the higher qualities of our nature ; that to gain any station there needs great industry, great learning, and great acuteness. I cannot forget that from the Bar of England have sprung many of our most illustrious statesmen, past and present ; and all



must feel, my lords, that to the Bar we owe those administrators of justice to whose unimpassioned wisdom we appeal with the confidence which I do now. But, my lords, I have ever believed, I believe at this moment—I see no libel in the expression of that belief, no want of taste under the circumstances of the case, in expressing it even here—that there is in the principles on which the practice of the Bar is based a taint of arrogance, I will not say audacity, but of that reckless spirit which is the necessary consequence of the possession and the exercise of irresponsible power.

“My lords, I am told, and have been told often in the course of these proceedings, that I have mistaken the nature of the connexion that subsists between the counsel and the client, and of the consequent privileges that accrue from it. It may be so, but I have at least adopted that opinion after some literary, if not legal, research. The question is one indeed of great delicacy and great difficulty ; it has been mooted on various occasions, at various intervals, during our late annals ; it has been discussed by very learned lawyers, it has been illustrated by very profound antiquaries, legal and constitutional ; has been made subject-matter for philosophical moralists, and even touched by the pleasantry of poignant wits. I confess that I myself have imbibed an opinion that it is the duty of a counsel to his client to assist him by all possible means, just or unjust, and even to commit, if

necessary, a crime for his assistance or extrication. My lords, this may be an outrageous opinion ; but, my lords, it is not my own. Allow me to read a description of the duty of a counsel to a client, and by a great authority : ‘An advocate, by the sacred duty which he owes his client, knows in the discharge of his duty but one person in the world—that client and none other. To save that client by all expedient means ; and to protect that client at all hazards and costs to all others, and among those others to himself, is the highest and most unquestioned of his duties ; and he must not regard the alarm, the sufferings, the torment, the destruction which he may bring upon any other. In the spirit of duty, he must go on reckless, even if his fate unhappily should be to involve his country in confusion.’

“Here, my lords, is a sketch, and by a great master ; here, my lords, is the rationale of the duties of an advocate, and drawn up by a Lord Chancellor. In this, my lords, is the idea of those duties expressed, before the highest tribunal of the country, by the Attorney-General of a Queen of England. According to this high authority, it is the duty of a counsel, for his client, even to commit treason. If then, my lords, I have erred in my estimate of the extent of these duties, it cannot be said, my lords, that I have erred without authority. Nor can this be considered as the extravagance of a mere rhetorical ebullition. My lords, I read this passage

from an edition of the speech just published by the noble orator, who, satisfied with the fame that it has so long enjoyed, now deems it worthy of the immortality of his own revision, and has just published this description unaltered, after twenty years' reflection, and with its most important portions printed in capital letters. And, my lords, I ask is there any member of this Bar who has had any experience, who has had any substantial practice, any sway of business—my lords, I will say more, is there any member of this profession, I care not how noble his nature or name, how serene his present mind or exalted his present station—who can say that in the course of a long career, in which this responsible power has been exercised, there have not been instances when the memory of its employment has occasioned him deep regret and lengthened vexation? My lords, I have done. I leave my case with confidence to your merciful consideration, briefly recapitulating the points on which I have attempted to put myself fairly before the Bench and the public. As to my offence against the law, I throw myself on your lordships' mercy; as to my offence against the individual, I have made him that reparation which a gentleman should, under the circumstances, cheerfully offer, and with which a gentleman should, in my opinion, be cheerfully content. I make this, my lords, not to avoid the consequences of my conduct, for right or wrong, good or bad, those consequences I am ever ready to



encounter ; but because I am anxious to soothe the feelings which I have unjustly injured, and evince my respect to the suggestions of the Bench. But as to my offence against the Bar, I do with the utmost confidence appeal to your lordships, however you may disapprove of my opinions, however objectionable, however offensive, even however odious they may be to you, that you will not permit me to be arraigned for one offence and punished for another. In a word, my lords, it is to the Bench I look with confidence to shield me from the vengeance of an irritated and powerful profession."

The learned judges having consulted together for some minutes, the Attorney-General rose and asked permission to address their lordships.

"Mr. Disraeli," he said, "had stated that he had given his learned counsel instructions, on showing cause, to do whatever that counsel should think proper ; and Mr. Disraeli had, in the concluding part of his address, made, as it seemed to him (the Attorney-General) and to his friends Sir F. Pollock and Sir. W. Follett, an ample apology ; he had said that he had no desire to injure the feelings of Mr. Austin, and had expressed his deep mortification and regret for the language he had used. If such a concession had been made before the application, their lordships never would have been troubled with it. If their lordships were now of opinion that the ample apology Mr.



Disraeli had made ought to be satisfactory, Mr. Austin was satisfied."

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The fight was now over ; but there remained a few parleyings among people of self-importance :

Lord Denman : "Then I understand you to say, that in consequence of the satisfactory terms of that apology, you do not feel called upon to pray for judgment on the defendant, provided we think we can, with any degree of propriety, pass over his offence unpunished ?"

The Attorney-General having replied affirmatively,

Lord Denman said : "The prayer for judgment having been withdrawn, it is infinitely more to the satisfaction of the Court that the matter should rest on reparation and apology, than that the law should be put in force against the person who has now made them. We must take them to be most ample and satisfactory after the application now made, and this matter will be considered at an end."

"Mr. Disraeli then withdrew."

(One imagines the reporter accented the "then"—Galileo Disraeli really did withdraw this time !)

But no, not altogether was that strange episode at an end. It is not ended even now. A writer in the press at the time declared : "The principle on which Mr. Disraeli has acted in manfully coming forward is just and proper, to arraign and condemn an unwarrant-

able and usurped privilege of a body of men who arrogate to themselves an exclusive right to launch out calumnies upon persons in their presence or in their absence." That sentiment has been echoed ever since, and has found almost official expression from the Bar Council of late ; so that when, in the good time coming—those palmy days that will yet have dates—the victory of that Justice from whom the Court takes its name becomes the common and dominant desire of opposing counsel—not the winning of the case, not personal nor the client's success—Disraeli may be accorded the statue of a valiant and, for all his submission, an unvanquished legal reformer, the pioneer who got the buffets that the front line must ever encounter.



***“ That Public Opinion which  
has been too long Abused ”***

What may be called the first letter of Disraeli's to find its way into a high political memoir was that which he addressed to the third Lord Londonderry concerning the career of his famous brother. Hitherto Disraeli's public letters had been a sort of popular assembly letters ; here was one, in theme and style, accredited to the House of Lords. *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, Second Marquis of*

*Londonderry*, were published in 1848 ; and Disraeli must have turned with something more than curiosity to p. 132 of the first volume, where, between letters from Aberdeen and Sir James Graham, and closely following another from Peel, his own was printed—the first of the long series that must finally appear amongst the great political human documents of the nineteenth century. It was addressed to Castlereagh's brother and biographer, he having written a "Letter to Lord Brougham" (a flimsy critic of Castlereagh), and having sent a copy of it to Disraeli.

*To Charles, Third Marquis of Londonderry.*

"July 24th, 1839.

"MY DEAR LORD,—I have just read your letter to Lord Brougham, and I cannot deny myself the sincere pleasure of congratulating you on the publication of what is not only a very spirited yet dignified vindication of your eminent relative's memory, but is an extremely interesting and valuable contribution to our political and historical literature. The style is worthy of the theme—fluent, yet sustained—and the sarcasm polished and most felicitous.

"It will make a considerable sensation ; and, if only for the original documents which it contains, will often be referred to. I assure you, my dear lord, I cannot easily express with what entire satisfaction I have perused this well-timed appeal to

that public opinion which has been too long abused on the character and career of a great statesman.

"I am, my dear lord, ever your obliged and faithful

"B. DISRAELI."

Not without bearing on Disraeli's own history are one or two passages to be found in close conjunction with his letters in the *Memoirs* of this statesman, vilified in life, appreciated after death. "He was a man," writes one, "of fixed principles and ideas ; and hence the hatred with which he was regarded and the abuse which the rabble heaped upon him. Had he yielded, had he withdrawn, he might have escaped the malignant calumnies incessantly poured forth against him ; but his character was too noble for concession when he felt that his course was right, and in the end his ideas triumphed." "You well know," writes another, and this was Sir Robert Peel, "that no vindication of your brother's memory was necessary for my satisfaction—that my admiration for his character is too firmly rooted to be shaken by criticisms of phrases and *cavils at particular acts selected from a long political career.*" Sir Robert's refusal to judge by isolated episodes of Castlereagh's completed career may suggest perhaps the verdict which, had he lived longer, he had haply passed on Lord Beaconsfield's own.



**"A Tragedy! and one for you"**

*To Lady Lyndhurst.*

[*End of 1839.*]

"MY DEAR LADY,—Lo! another Tragedy! and one for you. Pray do not forget that you and Miss Copley have kindly promised to dine with us on Tuesday.

"We have engaged the Tankervilles, Mr. Hope, etc., to have the honour of meeting the High Steward on Thursday, and tell Miss Copley I will summon some beaux worthy of her.

"Your Ladyship's faithful servant,

"Dis."

This was the first of the Disraelis' "little dinners" after their marriage. But it was not the invitation that was a tragedy for his correspondent, as might be hastily supposed. With the letter went a volume, *The Dane*, which its author, Mrs. Gore, had asked him to give to Lord Lyndhurst (then the newly elected High Steward of Cambridge University). "Lo, another Tragedy, and one for you!" Mrs. Gore's tragedy rather closely followed *Alarcos*, which Colburn had been advertising as "Mr. Disraeli's Tragedy." The "one for you" is one of the rare touches of a witty discrimination to be found in the hurried notes he wrote. Of Disraeli's friendship with Lord Lyndhurst and his acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Gore, something

is elsewhere said. But a word may be added of Lady Lyndhurst, who outlived all the men and other women now named and in the twentieth century moved in flesh and blood among the ghosts who inhabited her London drawing-room from more than six decades earlier. She was married to the Lord Chancellor in the year of Queen Victoria's accession. The event was a nine days' wonder ; for Lord Lyndhurst was the best dressed man of his day (and D'Orsay's); and, besides his personal popularity, had a political importance far greater than any Lord Chancellor has since possessed. His bride's maiden name was Georgiana Goldsmith. Disraeli was a shrewd observer of woman, and the impression made upon him by Lady Lyndhurst, whom he first met at a party at Lady Salisbury's, was entirely favourable. "Without being absolutely pretty," he said, "her appearance is highly interesting. She is very little, but elegant and delicate. She was most becomingly dressed in a white turban"—and what else he does not specify. Lady Lyndhurst became a most successful entertainer, and all the familiar forebodings about the failure of marriages made between an old man and a young woman were, in her case, utterly falsified. She kept her husband's memory sacred, wearing her widow's weeds for nearly forty years. Lady Lyndhurst it was who, at one of her own evening parties, introduced Dizzy to the Duke of Wellington, a memorable encounter : "He

accorded me a most gracious and friendly reception." At Lady Lyndhurst's table, too, Disraeli met Daniel Webster. American statesmen were then rarer visitors to this country than they now are. "He seemed to me a complete Brother Jonathan—a remarkable twang, as *tyrannical*, and all that; he also goes to the *levee*." Dizzy, nevertheless, notes the American orator's "fine brow and beetled, deep-set eyes"; though he unluckily left it to Sydney Smith to declare that no man could be so wise as Daniel Webster looked.



### *Disraeli, Debtor*

A man of genius (and of debts) who was presented to Disraeli in Whitehall, and on whose arm the Chief leaned for some steps, exclaimed, "If my creditors could only see me now!" Disraeli said:

"They never do—you meet them only when you are carrying a parcel, or are caught in a shower with no umbrella—an apparatus, by the way, that I refuse to support."

Disraeli, who had experienced most things, had suffered in earlier life the cares of pecuniary pressure. The future Chancellor of the Exchequer, with his budget of millions, had himself to think twice before he left his door lest judgments should be served upon

him. At his Maidstone election the town had been placarded with documents of the sort ; and Disraeli, to tide over his difficulties, was obliged to have recourse to an issue of what may be called Disraeli Bonds. Gradually, as the years went and fortune moderately came, he paid off all the liabilities incurred by the electoral struggles of his youth.

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Mrs. Blackwood, the first Earl of Dufferin's mother, asked Disraeli the Younger to bring his father to see her : which he delayed doing, in consequence of some pecuniary difficulties that (according to Lord Dufferin) momentarily estranged him from his father—the “too indulgent sire” of the *Home Letters*. When the old and young Disraeli did appear, Benjamin said he had been reconciled to his father (this is Lord Dufferin's story), the treaty being that he should bring his father to Mrs. Blackwood, and that his father should pay his debts.

Disraeli's opinion of Mrs. Blackwood on first meeting her at her sister Mrs. Norton's was :

“Mrs. Blackwood, also very handsome and very Sheridanic : she told me she was nothing. ‘You see, Georgy's the beauty’ (Lady St. Maur), ‘and Carry's the wit’ (Mrs. Norton), ‘and I ought to be the good one, but then I am not.’ I must say



I liked her exceedingly ; besides, she knows all my works by heart, and spouts whole pages of *V. G.* [*Vivian Grey*] and *C. F.* [*Contarini Fleming*] and the *Y. D.* [*Young Duke*]. In the evening came the beauty, Lady St. Maur, and anything so splendid I never gazed upon. Even the handsomest family in the world, which I think the Sheridans are, all looked dull. Clusters of the darkest hair, the most brilliant complexion, a contour of face perfectly ideal. In the evening Mrs. Norton sang and acted, and did everything that was delightful."

In contrast with Disraeli's sweet and witty impression of this mother and these aunts, Lord Dufferin, their son and nephew, late in life, put on paper, dully, only one reminiscence of the dead Minister by whom, politics apart, he had been promoted and petted, surely a little for the sake of those "ladies of yester-year." Strange that his solitary reminiscence should be a squalid one ; it related to Disraeli's pecuniary embarrassments, and to family complications that he (and he alone) says resulted therefrom. Disraeli the younger was asked to bring Disraeli the elder to one of these ladies ; and did so only after a delay due to an estrangement between father and son caused by the son's debts. Alas ! when Lord Dufferin so wrote, the Nemesis that guards the memories of the great was all too near.

*Unparliamentary Bills**To a Financial Agent.*

'CARLTON CLUB,  
'March 16th, 1842.

"MY DEAR SIR,—The hopeless illness of Mrs. Disraeli's mother has prevented me from being a continuous week in London since my return to England ; but I have not neglected your affairs.

"I was not aware that you held any presentable bills, and was under the misapprehension that your documents were promissory notes.

"It was my wish that Mr. Lovell should have communicated with you before they became due, but I never could succeed in seeing him. I called on him three times yesterday, and succeeded in seeing him very late. He promised, if possible, to communicate with you that evening. As I am now going out of town, I shall not be able to see him again, but I cannot doubt that, after what occurred yesterday, he has by this time written to you, and I trust satisfactorily.

"Yours sincerely,  
"D."

Disraeli, framer of bills in Parliament these five years, was still, as this letter shows, bothered with bills of another order. On his way to the Treasury he was personally impecunious ; and before he controlled the finances of the nation, had a rather severe apprenticeship in the management of his own. Already at this date he had been for two and a half years the husband



*Photo by the London Stereoscopic Company.*

BENJAMIN DISRAELI.

From a photograph taken in the 'sixties.

[*To face p. 338.*





of Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, whose wealth has often been exaggerated to give colour to the romantic story of her having discharged all his debts (mostly incurred at election times) upon the occasion of their marriage. The scene at which the list of his liabilities was presented to her has been pictured : even the talk has been liberally supplied : "She always knew that Benjamin's mess was a large one."

The widow of Mr. Wyndham Lewis did indeed succeed to the life interest in an income of £4000 a year and the house at Grosvenor Gate, though with no such "curious bequest" of coals and candles as has been generally reported ; but that income could not allow any great margin for the payment of these old accumulations of debt. "Mrs. Disraeli's mother," Mrs. Yate, so named by her marriage, after the death of Lieutenant Evans, with Dr. Yate, was herself a woman of fortune ; and Mrs. Disraeli, under whose care she had for some time been living, and who was away from Grosvenor Gate with her when Disraeli wrote this letter, was her mother's sole heir. We must, however, have done with the common story that Mrs. Disraeli as heir at law of her uncle, Sir James Viney, became possessed of Taynton Manor. Sir James had mortgaged the property to Mr. Wyndham Lewis ; and, a few months later than the date of which we are writing, Mrs. Disraeli, as one of her first husband's executors, foreclosed ; the Manor was

sold, and the proceeds were held under the trusts created by the Wyndham Lewis will. The money was Mrs. Disraeli's only for life. "In connexion with this sale," says Mr. J. Henry Harris, "a tradition survives in Gloucester that Mr. Disraeli attended the Auction Mart in the City of London, and that the purchaser (Mr. Laslett, M.P.) paid the money subsequently in cash to a Mr. Lovegrove (sometime Mrs. Disraeli's agent), who was requested by Mr. Disraeli to take charge of it for the night."<sup>1</sup> This circumstantial narrative is a myth. Mr. Disraeli was not present either at the sale or completion of the purchase, and there exists a note in Mr. Laslett's handwriting, endorsed by Mr. Lovegrove, showing how and to whom the purchase-money was paid; the gold and silver coins amounted to only £9 11s. 3d.; there was £600 in notes, and the balance consisted of various cheques.



### *The Peel-Disraeli Antagonism*

*To Sir Robert Peel.*

"GROSVENOR GATE,

"September 5th, 1841.

"DEAR SIR ROBERT,—I have shrunk from obtruding myself upon you at this moment, and

<sup>1</sup> Mr. James Sykes, for instance, quotes (in 1902) Mr. Henry J. Taylor of Gloucester as his authority for the statement that "she gave the estate to Mr. Disraeli, and that he sold it by auction"; also that "she had two houses in College Green which now belong to Lord Beaconsfield's executors." Local tradition, gravely quoted by historians, perpetually lowers—or elevates—legend to biography.

should have continued to do so if there were any one on whom I could rely to express my feelings.

"I am not going to trouble you with claims similar to those with which you must be wearied. I will not say that I have fought since 1834 four contests for your party, that I have expended great sums, have exerted my intelligence to the utmost for the propagation of your policy, and have that position in life which can command a costly seat.

"But there is one peculiarity in my case on which I cannot be silent. I have had to struggle against a storm of political hate and malice, which few men ever experienced, from the moment, at the instigation of a member of your Cabinet, I enrolled myself under your banner, and I have only been sustained under these trials by the conviction that the day would come when the foremost man of this country would publicly testify that he had some respect for my ability and my character.

"I confess, to be unrecognised at this moment by you appears to me to be overwhelming, and I appeal to your own heart—to that justice and that magnanimity which I feel are your characteristics—to save me from an intolerable humiliation.

"Believe me, dear Sir Robert, your faithful servant,

"B. DISRAELI."

This salient letter fitly heads a section dealing with the relations between Disraeli and Peel. For this letter, and the reply made to it, are frequently cited as bearing on their front the whole of the offending of Sir Robert in the eyes of the younger man. Because Peel did not "recognise" Disraeli, Disraeli did not go round with Peel on the Corn Laws, but fostered a Protectionist party, put up Lord George as a dummy leader, and, by some process of necromancy, arose on the ashes of Peel as the Phoenix of the Tory party. It is the Cabinet Trick of politics ; it takes no count of national movements ; the country lies a purblind puppet in the magician's hands.

Disraeli's application did not come alone. Probably it was the very same post that took to Whitehall the following letter from the lady who, three years before, had heard from her husband that Peel had heartily congratulated him on his marriage.

*Mrs. Disraeli to Sir Robert Peel.*

*(Confidential.)*

"GROSVENOR GATE,  
"Saturday Night.

"DEAR SIR ROBERT PEEL,—I beg you not to be angry with me for my intrusion, but I am overwhelmed with anxiety. My husband's political career is for ever crushed, if you do not appreciate him.

"Mr. Disraeli's exertions are not unknown to you, but there is much he has done that you



cannot be aware of, though they have had no other aim but to do you honour, no wish for recompense but your approbation.

“He has gone further than most to make your opponents his personal enemies. He has stood four most expensive elections since 1834, and gained seats from Whigs in two, and I pledge myself as far as one seat, that it shall always be at your command.

“Literature he has abandoned for politics. Do not destroy all his hopes, and make him feel his life has been a mistake.

“May I venture to name my own humble but enthusiastic exertion in times gone by, for the party, or rather for your own splendid self? They will tell you at Maidstone, that more than £40,000 was spent through my influence only.

“Be pleased not to answer this, as I do not wish any human being to know I have written to you this humble petition.

“I am now, as ever, dear Sir Robert, your most faithful servant,

“MARY ANNE DISRAELI.”

Mr. Charles Stuart Parker, most judicious of editors, sandwiches between the two letters the two lines :  
“[Disraeli’s] appeal was seconded, probably without his knowledge, by the devoted partner of his aspira-

tions." If the phrase "devoted partner of his aspirations" has a suggestion of burlesque in it, that suggestion does not show Mr. Parker at his happiest ; nor does the "probably" discover him in one of the confident moments to which he is not elsewhere a stranger.

Mrs. Disraeli's word that she wrote at her own volition is not difficult of acceptance. Had Disraeli known of his wife's letter, he need not, and surely would not, have written his own. Such abstention would pass for a Machiavelian master-stroke ; and in not sheltering himself behind this petticoat, he must be held to be deficient in cunning by those who make cunning his characteristic. The situation has its counterparts in most domestic histories. This was a woman of impulse, and her husband's interests were acutely hers to the end of a long married life, which had now run but for two years. "With his usual prudence Sir Robert Peel first disclaimed any responsibility for the instigation of Mr. Disraeli [in 1834], by a member of the Cabinet unnamed, to join the party." Sir Robert's "usual prudence"! If that were an exhibition of it, one wonders how he ever carried on the Queen's Government. If that passage of Disraeli's letter had borne such an interpretation as Sir Robert gave it, delicacy would have passed it lightly over between men of affairs, often meeting in public and private ; but the forcing of that senti-

ment into words which scarcely bear it seems to indicate that Sir Robert's natural suspiciousness betrayed him into putting upon Disraeli a superfluous indignity.

*Sir Robert Peel to Disraeli.*

“WHITEHALL,  
“September 7th, 1841.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I must in the first place observe that no member of the Cabinet which I have formed ever received from me the slightest authority to make to you the communication to which you refer.

“Had I been consulted by that person, I should have at once declined to authorise a communication which would have been altogether at variance with the principle on which I have uniformly acted in respect to political engagements, and by adhering to which I have left myself at entire liberty to reconcile—as far as my limited means allow—justice to individual claims with the efficient conduct of the public service.

“I know not who is the member of the Cabinet to whom you allude, and cannot but think he acted very imprudently. But quite independently of this consideration, I should have been very happy had it been in my power to avail myself of your offer of service ; and your letter is one of the many I receive which too forcibly impress upon me how painful and invidious is the duty which I have been compelled to undertake.

I am only supported in it by the consciousness that my desire has been to do justice.

“I trust also that when candidates for Parliamentary office calmly reflect on my position, and the appointments I have made—when they review the names of those previously connected with me in public life, whom I have been absolutely compelled to exclude, the claims founded on acceptance in 1834 with the almost hopeless prospects of that day, the claims, too, founded on new party combinations—I trust they will then understand how perfectly insufficient are the means at my disposal to meet the wishes that are conveyed to me by men whose co-operation I should be proud to have, and whose qualifications and pretensions for office I do not contest.”

*Disraeli to Sir Robert Peel.*

“GROSVENOR GATE,  
“September 8th, 1841.

“DEAR SIR ROBERT,—Justice requires that I should state that you have entirely misconceived my meaning, in supposing that I intended even to intimate that a promise of official promotion had ever been made to me, at any time, by any member of your Cabinet.

“I have ever been aware that it was not in the power of any member of your Cabinet to fulfil such engagements, had he made them : permit me to add that it is utterly alien to my nature to bargain and



stipulate on such subjects. Parliamentary office should be the recognition of party service and Parliamentary ability, and as such only was it to me an object of ambition.

“It appears to me that you have mistaken an allusion to my confidence in your sympathy, for a reference to a pledge received from a third person. If such a pledge had been given me by yourself, and not redeemed, I should have taken refuge in silence. Not to be appreciated may be a mortification : to be baulked of a promised reward is only a vulgar accident of life, to be borne without a murmur.

“Your faithful servant,  
“B. DISRAELI.”

Nobody will deny the dignity of Disraeli's second letter. Was the first undignified? In itself, an application for service under Government cannot be ear-marked from other applications for service, addressed to corporations or to newspapers or to employers of any kind. Disraeli applied the general judgment on a transaction of the sort; he did what others had done before him. If the inherent judgment did not err, was taste lacking? Taste must be tested by custom; and the reader of the whole very interesting and creditable Peel correspondence will not be left in doubt as to the very common habit of all sorts and conditions of men in

making known their wants, were these viceroalties or baronetcies. Indeed, if the kind of patriotic pride with which people talk of having "served their country" be not a fiction, the application is in itself an act of a patriot. Methods may differ. A Minister may be so closely in touch with a man that a look or a syllable suffices: a letter would be a superfluity. In other cases a third party may say the word or write the note. There are situations in which a wink or a pressure of the hand may be enough. Some, perhaps because they have no need to stand cap in hand, shake the head at those less luckily placed. One such, the son and the nephew of two of Peel's Cabinet colleagues, and himself a Cabinet Minister in successive Liberal administrations, speaking of this application of Disraeli's, said to me in a parenthesis, "Which I suppose nobody who respected himself would make." Well, the Marquis of Ripon, who does respect himself and whom everybody respects, had as little need to ask as had his father or his uncle, Lord Goderich or Lord de Grey.<sup>1</sup> But had they been,

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter addressed by Lord Stanley to Sir Robert Peel when a Conservative Government was in formation in 1839: "Ripon has this moment been with me, anxious to know what was going on. I said I knew it was your intention to offer him a seat in the Cabinet, but of offices I knew nothing. He said he was quite satisfied, that he should not have liked to be passed over, but that you would not find him exigent. I thought it best to tell you this at once." On the same occasion communications passed between Sir Robert and Lady de Grey, who wrote to him, with a feminine *camaraderie* that would have delighted Disraeli, immediately on the defeat of the Whigs over the Jamaica Bill: "My

instead of great personages, men who, without being greedy, had yet to live by what they earned, they might well have run after the Minister instead of leaving the Minister to run after them. Bad form in these matters is surely often the form of those whom we dislike—of the alien.

We may leave this first scene in this Peel drama, which already begins to turn into tragedy, by saying that if Disraeli chose his methods badly, Peel, for his part, did not know his man; and there we have the advantage over Peel—we have seen proof of Disraeli's powers; and if we call the Minister stupid, we do so with the wisdom of those who are wise after the event. Discernment was not the forte of "the great mediocrity": his was a nature that owed everything to tuition; to intuition nothing at all. He liked the ordinary, and Disraeli was never that; not in his mind, not in his manner, not in his name, not even in his dress. Dress is still a vast item in the Englishman's table of appreciation; dress or the want

dear Peel,—The vote of last night may probably call you into power. Pray forgive your most truly attached friend if she gives you a word of advice. The Queen has always expressed herself much impressed with Lord Melbourne's open manner and his truth. The latter quality you possess, the former not. Now, dear Peel, the first impression on so young a girl's mind is of immense consequence. I wish you success from my friendship for you, from my high esteem and admiration of your noble character, and from the belief that you alone can avert the evils which threaten the country. Your very affectionate H. DE GREY." The lady had from her "dear Peel" a reply in which he offered high office to her husband.



of it. Bolingbroke, the model of Disraeli in so many intellectual attainments and political methods, is still known to a large public mostly as the man who ran naked in the Park.

But the relations between Peel and Disraeli before this exchange of letters are worth a note. It has been charged against the minister, on one hand, that he had nothing but haughty disdain for Disraeli, man, writer, and publicist; against Disraeli, on the other, that in writing to Peel he was guilty of an intrusion that merged into insolence. Both charges are unjust; and he who refutes the one has the gratification of automatically refuting the other, at least partially; righting both Disraeli and Peel with one stroke of the pen. The simple truth is that Peel, within his limitations, formed a fair estimate of Disraeli's abilities and gave him a welcome rather unusually cordial for a man who, if manners made that man, could not but be accounted cold to the point of zero.

In 1836, five years before the Correspondence, Disraeli sent a copy of his *Vindication of the English Constitution* to Peel, by whom he had been greeted "most flatteringly" six months earlier at a dinner given by Lord Chandos to a party of men, all senators except Disraeli. "Late and grudgingly," he says, he sent the book "with a cold dry note, convinced that he would never notice or even confess to having heard of it, being, as you well know, by reputation the



most jealous, rigid, and haughty of men." That letter does not appear in the Peel Correspondence: probably it was not kept; for the man who addressed the minister was not yet even a member of Parliament. If the letter was cold, the book was all aglow; and Sir Robert could not look down its taking contents-table without reading "Vindication of the Recent Policy of Sir Robert Peel and his Cabinet." In a couple of pages the young writer defends the Tory Government for passing Democratic measures they had formerly opposed.

The point is one of cogent bearing upon the political position of Disraeli. From 1831 to 1834 he had been politically unlabelled. He had been anti-Whig without being pro-Tory. He recognised and defended in the opportunism of Sir Robert an approach to his own early attitude of inveterate dislike for the Whigs, "with," as he here says again, "their mouths full of the People, Reform, and Liberty, and their portfolios bursting with oligarchical *coups d'état*. If," he continues, "I appeal to the measures brought forward by Sir Robert Peel as evidence that the Tories are not opposed to measures of political amelioration, I shall perhaps be met with that famous dilemma of insincerity or apostasy which was urged during the last general election on the Whig hustings with an air of irrefutable triumph, which, had it been better grounded, had been less amusing. . . . This great deed, therefore, instead of

being an act of insincerity or apostasy, was conceived in good faith and in perfect harmony with the previous policy of the party ; it was at the same time indispensable, and urged alike by the national voice and the national interests, and history will record it as the conduct of patriotic wisdom. . . . The clause of Lord Chandos, your lordship's (Lord Lyndhurst's) triumphant defence of the freemen of England, and the last registration, are three great Democratic movements and quite in keeping with the original and genuine character of Toryism." The passage illustrates Disraeli's future as well as his past ; his claim for Peel covers the policy of his own Household Suffrage Act of later years.

Be it borne in mind that to Lord Lyndhurst was addressed the letter in which Disraeli defended at once the English Constitution and the constitutional minister. Disraeli had first met Peel's Lord Chancellor a year earlier. At once the two men liked each other ; and it was Lyndhurst who in 1834 went to Greville, and otherwise busied himself, to get a seat into which Disraeli could settle, at last a wearer of the badge. If the liking between the two men was mutual, so was the influence : from Lyndhurst Disraeli received Peel's shilling, but Lyndhurst was able to hear and to report upon the policy for which this recruit was ready to fight. In the result a newspaper notice of the time speaks of both Lyndhurst and Peel as

having "adopted Mr. Disraeli's view of the Constitution." Under these conditions did Sir Robert receive the printed "Letter to Lyndhurst" and the too sensitively distant manuscript letter of Disraeli's ; and on this occasion, at any rate, the response he made exceeded the expectations of his correspondent. This is what he wrote :

"I beg to return you my best thanks for that copy of your work . . . for which I am indebted for your kind attention and consideration. It is not the only one in my possession, for, attracted as well by your name as by some extracts in the public papers, which struck me as very forcibly written, I had taken the first opportunity of procuring a copy, and was gratified and surprised to find that a familiar and apparently exhausted topic could be treated with so much original force of argument and novelty of illustration. I thank you both for the work itself and the satisfaction which the reading of it has afforded me."

Lyndhurst gave Disraeli the extra delight of saying that this expression was "*much*, considering the writer."

In the July of 1837 Disraeli was returned to the House of Commons as Tory member for Maidstone, and in November took his seat on the second bench behind Peel, encouraged, no doubt, to that propinquity by Peel's welcome to him the day before, at the Carlton.



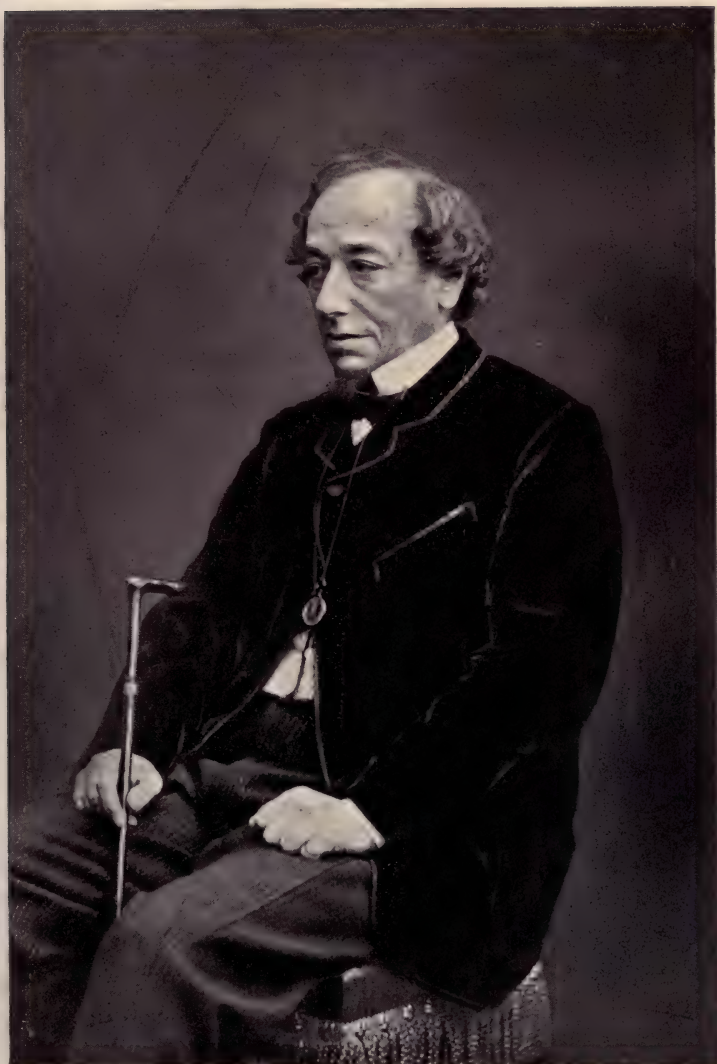
"He welcomed me very warmly," Disraeli wrote, "and all noticed his cordial demeanour. He asked me to join a small dinner at the Carlton on Thursday—'a House of Commons dinner purely,' he said; 'by that time we shall know something of the temper of the House.'"

There must have been something very exciting in that "we" to the neophyte. His admiration for Peel's speech on the Address finds expression, not in any set form, but in a private letter—"one of the finest speeches I ever heard, most powerful and even brilliant." A fortnight later we have Peel's opinion on Disraeli's first speech, which he had turned round to cheer during its delivery: "I say anything but failure: he must make his way." A few days later he dined with Peel at Peel's first sessional party. Again, a few days later, when he made his second speech, "Peel cheered loudly" at one point, and indeed, says Disraeli, "throughout my remarks he backed me"—metaphorically and literally too.

Fifteen months later there was another dinner at Peel's, where Disraeli was more than welcome.

"I came late, having mistaken the hour," he writes to Bradenham, where all his triumphs had a second life. "I found some twenty-five gentlemen grubbing in solemn silence. I threw a shot over the table and set them going, and in time they became even noisy. Peel, I think, was quite





*Photo by W. & D. Downey, London.*

LORD BEACONSFIELD.

From a photograph taken in the 'seventies.

[To face p. 354.



pleased that I broke the awful stillness, as he talked to me a good deal, though we were far removed."

Even that fourth decade of the century, which was to witness the breach, began in amity. In July, 1840, "Peel most gallantly came to the rescue of his 'honourable friend the member for Maidstone,' and gave me immense *kudos*."

The letter written to Sir Robert a year later invited him, in effect, to bear official testimony to the ability and the character that he had seemed, in private and in Parliament, to appreciate. The wording of the reply which "Dear Sir Robert" sent to "My dear Sir" was an undoubted rebuff; the Minister assumed the defensive in a manner most provocative. Disraeli, to his astonishment, found himself treated as a schemer by the man who had "backed" him, and dined him, and called him his "friend." A regretful refusal of office on the ground that other claims were paramount would have carried disappointment, no doubt; but this was to inflict most superfluous pain. Something, unknown to Disraeli, must have changed Peel's attitude towards him, and this at the last moment; for, on the very eve of the Dissolution, in the June of 1841, Disraeli sent to Sir Robert a memorandum dealing with Lord John Russell's reflections on his Parliamentary defeat.

Whence came that change? Possibly there is a

hint of it in the formation of the Young England party in 1841. It was of the nature of a fad in the eyes of the elders. Thomas Love Peacock satirised it in *Crotchet Castle*. Disraeli, in *Sybil*, applies by the mouth of the conventional Tory the term "crotchety" to Egremont's (his own) speech in defence of the Chartists; and elsewhere we have the dictum: "Well, that will not do for Peel. He does not like crotchety men." The clue seems worth a mention, but it does not carry us far, and we feel that the mystery of the subsequent Disraeli Denial is not the only mystery to pass unsolved into history with the Peel-Disraeli correspondence of 1841.

Many things must have added fuel to the fires of Disraeli's just resentment against the tone of Sir Robert's letter. To begin with, he was no doubt pressed for money, in spite of a prosperous marriage and of "that position in life" to which allusion had been made. An autograph letter put at my disposal, and dated six months later than the letter to Peel, betrays a pecuniary pressure which his wife's income (not yet increased by her inheritance from her mother) had been unable in two years to remove. It is printed on another page, but these allusions to money expended on elections should be read in the light of it; Disraeli, in his embarrassment, thought his expenditure on the party was one which, under the circumstances, the party might feel inclined to recoup.



There was talk, private and public, about the expectation of office. "When the Ministry of 1841 was forming, both Disraeli and his wife gave out that they were to have the Secretaryship of the Admiralty," is the nasty (and, with Peel's letter before us, we may say the untruthful) version of the Grosvenor Gate expectations given in one of "the delectable" Abraham Hayward's letters. In Parliament, too, Lord Palmerston had his jaunty jibe. Disraeli made a proposal to unite the consular and diplomatic services (he had fared well at the hands of consuls during his early travels, and with his usual sense of public logic sought, when the chance came, to give legislative effect to the high opinion he had formed of them), and in the course of debate Lord Palmerston, opposing, said: "The honourable gentleman had affirmed the general principle that political adherents ought to be rewarded by appointments, and he regretted to observe an exception to that rule in the person of the honourable member himself." Disraeli felt the prick, no doubt; he gave in return a rapier thrust. He offered his acknowledgments for the noble Viscount's aspirations for an opponent's political promotion:

"The noble Viscount is a consummate master of the subject; and if he will only impart to me the secret by which he has himself contrived to retain office during seven successive Administrations,

the present debate will certainly not be without a result."

Disraeli's proposal was, Mr. O'Connor jubilantly says, "treated with as scant courtesy by Peel as by Palmerston." That this was Disraeli's own impression we shall shortly see. Mr. O'Connor and Disraeli are for once united, and against the Minister. The apparently sudden prejudice against Disraeli in Sir Robert's mind had evidently come to stay. Mr. O'Connor testifies, on the other hand, to Disraeli's unruffled loyalty to Peel. "He continued to laud Sir Robert with unabated zeal," he says of the 1842 session. And again: "During the greater part of the session of 1843 Mr. Disraeli continued to be a zealous supporter of Sir Robert Peel." In the following year *Coningsby* was published. It is from Sir Robert Peel's own copy of that work, with the page turned down at the place, that I transcribe the passage in which Disraeli records the accession of Wellington and Peel to high office in 1819:

"There was an individual who had not long entered public life, but who had already filled considerable, though still subordinate, offices. Having acquired a certain experience of the duties of administration and distinction for his mode of fulfilling them, he had withdrawn from his public charge; perhaps because he found it a barrier to the attainment of that Parliamentary reputation for

which he had already shown both a desire and a capacity ; perhaps, because being young and independent, he was not over anxious irremediably to identify his career with a school of politics of the infallibility of which his experience might have already made him a little sceptical. But he possessed the talents that were absolutely wanted, and the terms were at his own dictation. A very distinguished mediocrity was thrust out, and Mr. Peel became Secretary of State. From this moment dates that intimate connection between the Duke of Wellington and the present First Minister. It was the sympathetic result of superior minds placed among inferior intelligences. From this moment, too, the domestic government of the country assumed a new character, and one universally admitted to have been distinguished by a spirit of enlightened progress and comprehensive amelioration."

There was no gall mixed with the ink of Disraeli in this sketch of the character and consequences of Peel's admission to Cabinet rank.

Nothing can be idler, then, than a common assertion that Disraeli, "spurned" by Peel in 1841, at once, and with no shame, went into opposition. The Repeal of the Corn Laws was a great event, and one which cannot be left out of the reckoning. It was Peel who withdrew from the Protectionist members ; not they from Peel. Nor were there

wanting other signs of the great rent imminent in the temple of Toryism. Disraeli saw ahead ; and his foreseeing brought upon him the boycott of the Minister when next the Minister issued a summons to his followers.

*Disraeli to Peel.*

"GROSVENOR GATE,  
"February 4th, 1844.

"DEAR SIR ROBERT,—I was quite unaware until Friday night, when I was generally apprised of it, that the circumstance of my not having received the usual circular from yourself to attend Parliament was intentional.

"The procedure, of course, admits of only one inference.

"As a mere fact, the circumstance must be unimportant both to you and to myself. For you, in the present state of parties, which will probably last our generation, a solitary vote must be a matter of indifference ; and for me, our relations, never much cultivated, had for some time merged in the mere not displeasing consciousness of a political connection with an individual eminent for his abilities, his virtues, and his station.

"As a matter of feeling, however, I think it right that a public tie, formed in the hour of political adversity, which has endured many years, and which has been sustained on my side by some exertions, should not terminate without this clear



understanding of the circumstances under which it has closed.

"I am informed that I am to seek the reason of its disruption in my Parliamentary conduct during the last session. On looking over the books, I perceive that there were four occasions on which I ventured to take a principal part in debate.

"On the first I vindicated your commercial policy, on grounds then novel in discussion, but which I believed conducive to your interest and your honour, and the justness and accuracy of which, though never noticed by yourself, or any of your colleagues, were on a subsequent occasion referred to and formally acknowledged by the leader of the Opposition.

"In the second instance I spoke on a treaty of a difficult and delicate nature, against which the Opposition urged no insignificant charges, and to assist you to defend which I was aware you would not be likely to find efficacious support on your own side. I have reason to believe that my efforts on this occasion were not wholly uninfluential on opinion, although certainly I never learned this from any member of her Majesty's Government.

"At the very end of the session there were two other occasions on which I spoke, and against isolated points of the existing policy ; I mean with respect to Ireland and the Turkish Empire. Although an indiscreet individual, apparently premonished, did in the last instance conceive a charge

against me of treating the Government with 'systematic contumely,' he was utterly unable to substantiate, scarcely equal to state, the imputation, and the full miscarriage was generally admitted. I can recall no expression in those remarks more critical than others which have been made on other subjects, as on your agricultural policy, for example, by several of the supporters of your general system. These remarks may indeed have been deficient in that hearty good-will which should be our spontaneous sentiment to our political chief, and which I have generally accorded to you in no niggard spirit ; but pardon me if I now observe, with frankness but with great respect, that you might have found some reason for this, if you had cared to do so, in the want of courtesy in debate which I had the frequent mortification of experiencing from you since your accession to power.

"Under these circumstances, stated without passion, and viewed, I am sure, without acrimony, I am bound to say that I look upon the fact of not having received your summons, coupled with the ostentatious manner in which it has been bruited about, as a painful personal procedure which the past by no means authorised."

*Peel to Disraeli.*

"WHITEHALL,  
"February 6th, 1844.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Although the omission on my part to request your attendance at the meeting of Parliament was not an accident or inadvertent omission, it certainly was not the result of any feeling of personal irritation or ill-will on account of observations made by you in the House of Commons.

"I hope I have not a good memory for expressions used in debate which cause surprise or pain at the moment, and it would be quite unsuitable to the spirit in which your letter is written, and in which it is received, were I, after the lapse of several months, to refresh my recollection of such expressions, if such were used.

"My reason for not sending you the usual circular was an honest doubt whether I was entitled to send it—whether towards the close of the last session of Parliament you had not expressed opinions as to the conduct of the Government in respect to more than one important branch of public policy, foreign and domestic, which precluded me, in justice both to you and to myself, from preferring personally an earnest request for your attendance.

"If you will refer to the debate on the Irish Arms Bill, and to that on Servia, and recall to your recollection the general tenor of your observations on the

conduct of the Government, you will, I think, admit that my doubt was not an unreasonable one.

“It gives me, however, great satisfaction to infer from your letter—as I trust I am justified in inferring—that my impressions were mistaken, and my scruples unnecessary.

“I will not conclude without noticing two or three points adverted to in your letter.

“I am unconscious of having on any occasion treated you with the want of that respect and courtesy which I readily admit are justly your due. If I did so, the act was wholly unintentional on my part.

“Any comments that were made on expressions used by you towards the Government were, so far as is consistent with my knowledge, altogether spontaneous on the part of the member from whom they proceeded. They were at any rate not made at my instigation or suggestion, direct or indirect.

“Lastly, I cannot call to mind that I have mentioned to a single person—excepting to the one or two to whom the mention was absolutely unavoidable—that I had omitted to address to you a request for your attendance. Nothing could be further from my wishes or feelings than that there should be any ostentatious notice of the omission.”

Once more had Peel tried to place Disraeli in a difficulty ; he was to be ostracised not from the



Government only, but from the party itself. Things did not mend when Factory legislation followed. For here again the Young England party, supporting Lord Ashley's resolution to restrict the hours of labour for women and for children under thirteen years of age to ten a day, twice defeated the Government in the Lobby. Peel's account of the matter, rendered to the Queen, is quite candid: "The additional restriction of labour was opposed by your Majesty's servants on the ground that it exposed the manufacturers of this country to a very formidable competition with those of other countries, in which labour is not restricted; that it must lead at a very early period to a great reduction in the wages of the workmen," etc.—Time, on the side of Disraeli, has refuted Peel's premisses. "A great body of the agricultural members," Peel proceeds, "partly out of hostility to the Anti-Corn Law League, partly from the influence of humane feelings, voted against the Government." For good or for evil, Peel, though he led the Country party, was a manufacturer's man. King Ernest of Hanover's despairing remark may here have some application: "The jenny will out."

A Coercion Bill for Ireland had equally failed to secure Disraeli's sympathy; and it is interesting during the passage of Mr. Wyndham's Land Bill to recall that Disraeli, sixty years ago, declared: "If the noble Lord (John Russell) will come

forward with a comprehensive plan to settle the Irish question, I will support it, even though I might afterwards feel it necessary to retire from Parliament or to place my seat at the disposal of my constituency." All this, in Peel's eyes, was crotchety enough, no doubt.

Convincing proof of Peel's prejudice is afforded by letters Sir James Graham wrote to him and he to Sir James Graham. Disraeli asked Sir James to appoint his brother to a Parliamentary clerkship. Such requests are the commonplaces of politics. Yet Sir James writes to Peel :

"I was astonished at receiving a letter from Disraeli asking for a place for his brother. His letter is an impudent one, doubly so when I remember his conduct and language in the House of Commons towards the end of the last session. I thought it better to answer him by return of post. To have bantered him on party ties would have been degrading. To have held out vague hopes would have been represented to him as unfair. I determined therefore to give him a civil but flat refusal."

Because Disraeli had not seen everything with the eye of ministers, one of them thinks him "impudent" in his brother's behalf, and another—Peel himself—dances to this strange tune.

"I am very glad," he replies to Graham, who was by way of being a friend to Disraeli, "that Mr. Disraeli

has asked for an office for his brother. It is a good thing when such a man puts his shabbiness on record. He asked me for office himself, and I was not surprised that being refused he became independent and a patriot. But to ask favours after his conduct last session is too bad. However, it is a bridle in his mouth."

The minister who wrote of this shabbiness had written complacently enough that half the Country-gentlemen had written to him for baronetcies : not for posts of service, but favours barren to the State. "A bridle in his mouth !" Sir Robert, when he wrote that, must have had in mind a horse that might not look out of the stable door at others allowed to leap over the hedge.

The Anti-Repeal speeches of Disraeli pass in common parlance as philippics of unmeasured violence and virulence. I doubt if any such brand will be put upon them in the near future. Readers who measure them against other weapons of speech used in Parliamentary campaigning will find that the difference lies in the quality of the steel, not in the quantity of it, nor in the weight and rapidity with which the blows fell. And these thrusts went home ; others, clumsy, miss their mark ; but in that expertness is no malice nor in that clumsiness any magnanimity. Party warfare is party warfare : it is neither brotherhood nor peace. There are the usual shibboleths ; and



a shifty rhetoric supplies the combatants with most of them. Disraeli was not as a rule rhetorical ; perhaps, then, we notice the more his infrequent lapses. When he said that ministers had found the Whigs bathing and had taken their clothes ; when he named Sir Robert "the great Parliamentary middleman" and said that Peel's life was one great Appropriation Clause, he raised a laugh too cheaply ; and he knew it, for he himself had defended Peel's opportunism in Reform. But this is the stage fencing with which the House is familiar. Disraeli merely spoke its tongue, stooping. On other occasions he raised it up to his own heights. Nor can one wonder if he furbished up all manner of weapons for this unparalleled battle. Young Englander as he was, and therefore with a mission of amelioration for the manufacturing population, he was to sit for an agricultural constituency ; and it was agriculture that was not only menaced by Free Trade, but betrayed by Peel.

To forget these things is an idleness which I will not practise by ignoring the likelihood that a Disraeli not slighted by Peel might have brought a more indulgent eye to Peel's metamorphosis. We condemn in other nations what we gloss over in our own ; reprobate in our enemies the qualities we tolerate in our friends, and see (some of us) in our families beauties and excellences to which we should remain blind in the bodies and minds of strangers. This

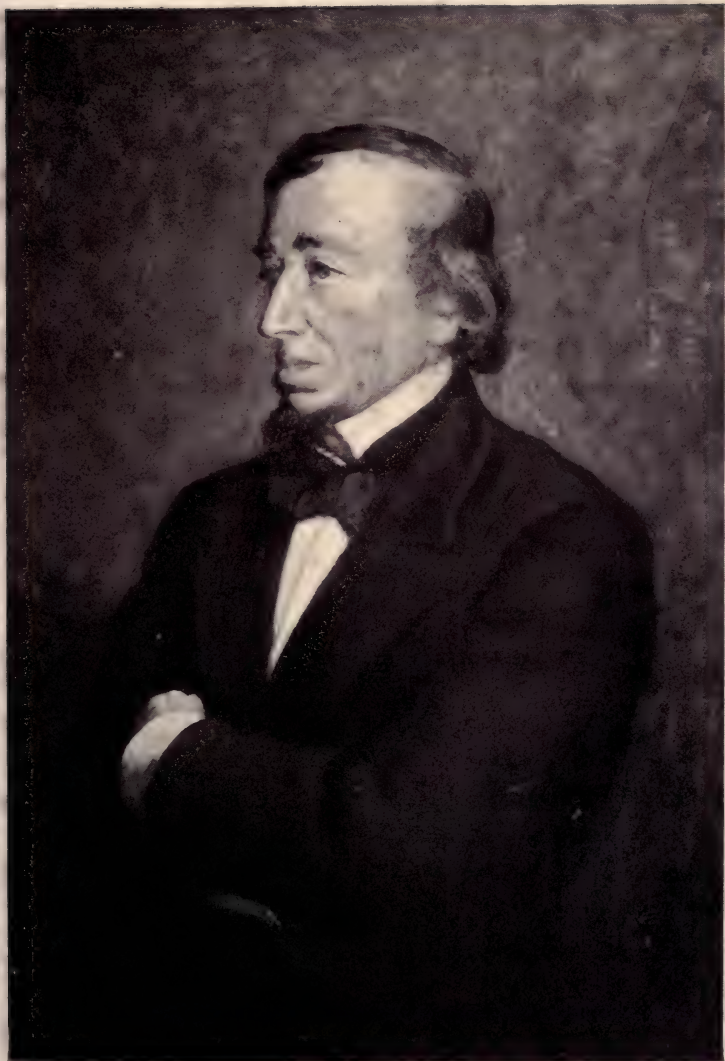


indulgence goes by great names—patriotism, charity, love of the brethren. Its converse, therefore—the dislike of what is distant from us, the suspicion with which we meet suspicion—need not be called any very hard terms. Disraeli was in the mood no doubt to throw his dart, but, above all, Sir Robert gave himself away as a target—a “sentient target,” that was the pity of it. Some of the quotations commonly made are flippant and foppish enough without their context; the spangle is handed round, while the robe from which it is plucked is thrust aside. The spangle is no covering. Between Free Trade and Protection the battle is not over. These lines are written at a moment when a powerful minister has put down on his programme a preferential tariff between England and her Colonies. The old fiction of faction, invented in great part to do despite to Disraeli, that none but a knave or a fool would combat Free Trade, is passing, is past. At least it is arguable whether a nation should destroy the home granaries on which it may be driven to depend in time of war and destroy, too, the fields from which it may best recruit its army. A foreseeing British officer<sup>1</sup> made his “Plea for the Peasant,” in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century—to deaf ears. In his mind's eye, he saw in the procession

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-General Sir William Butler in *Far Out* (which time has shown that *he* was not).

of peasants leaving the country-side for the towns and the Colonies a Retreating Army: he saw the White Flag in the white face of the slums. To that plea the Boer war has opened all ears, save the ears of atrophy, to the need of a yeoman army now. Nor do we forsake the great ideal of Free Trade, nor fail to see in it a first step towards the realisation of that dream of man's brotherhood, which will haunt the world till the world is cold, when we pause to count the number of prophecies prophesied by Free Trade prophets in the 'forties which time has left unfulfilled, and when we behold on the map the boundaries, sheer and abrupt as ever, raised everywhere against our traffic by those, even of our own children, for whom we have laid our own landmarks down. England against all the world: nay, rather, England for all the world, and all the world against England. Free Trade marks us then as that great thing—a band of visionaries. But in the Parliamentary debates one looks in vain for visions; they are all about provisions—a very differently debatable matter.

On, then, we pass, to that Third Reading of the Repeal of the Corn Duties, which was to pass by the large majority of combined Peelites and the old party of Free Trade. It was the strangest hour that ever struck in the life of a statesman: it was the hour of his triumph and of his capitulation; an



*Photo by Walker & Cockerell.*

LORD BEACONSFIELD,

After the portrait by Sir J. E. Millais, Bart., P.R.A., in the possession of the Hon. W. F. Danvers Smith, M.P., the sittings for which were interrupted by Lord Beaconsfield's last illness.

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hour of emotions, described to the quick in the Biography of Lord George Bentinck ; an hour in which, moreover, the saviour of his country, as he was hailed by his enemies of old time, appealed to pity as a martyr, since he had not been followed into the hostile camp by the whole of his former political friends. "Sir," he said, with a gravity that lent almost freshness to matter-of-course phrases, "I foresaw that the course which I have pursued from a sense of public duty would expose me to serious sacrifices. I foresaw, as its inevitable result, that I must forfeit friendships which I most highly valued—that I must interrupt political relations in which I felt sincere pride.<sup>1</sup> But the smallest of all the penalties

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli says this better for Sir Robert than Sir Robert said it for himself. The living, personal passage comes from the Biography of Lord George Bentinck, where Disraeli describes Peel's defeat on the Irish Coercion Bill in 1846: "But it was not merely their numbers that attracted the anxious observation of the Treasury Bench as the Protectionists passed in defile before the minister to the hostile Lobby. It was impossible that he could have marked them without emotion: the flower of that great party which had been so proud to follow one who had been so proud to lead them. They were men to gain whose hearts and the hearts of their fathers had been the aim and exultation of his life. They had extended to him an unlimited confidence and an admiration without stint. They had stood by him in the darkest hour, and had borne him from the depths of political despair to the proudest of living positions. Right or wrong, they were men of honour, breeding, and refinement, high and generous character, great weight and station in the country, which they had ever placed at his disposal. They had been not only his followers, but his friends; had joined in the same pastimes, drank from the same cup, and in the pleasantness of private life had often forgotten together the cares and strife of politics. He

which I anticipated were the continued venomous attacks of the honourable member for Shrewsbury." The hit was a good one ; if it had not a strict relation to facts, at least it repeated the common cry that had passed from pen to pen in the party newspapers. The alien who wrote novels had attacked the great English Minister : let that be known in favour of the great English Minister ; and let the great English Minister and the multitude conveniently forget the bitterness with which he had formerly been assailed

must have felt something of this, while the Mannerses, the Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers, and the Lennoxes passed before him. And those country gentlemen, "those gentlemen of England," of whom, but five years ago, the very same building was ringing with his pride of being the leader—if his heart were hardened to Sir Charles Burrell, Sir William Jolliffe, Sir Charles Knightly, Sir John Trollope, Sir Edward Kerrison, Sir John Tyrrell, he surely must have had a pang, when his eye rested on Sir John Yarde Buller, his choice and pattern country gentleman, whom he had himself selected and invited but six years back to move a vote of want of confidence in the Whig Government, in order, against the feeling of the Court, to install Sir Robert Peel in their stead. They trooped on : all the men of metal and large-acred squires, whose spirit he had so often quickened and whose counsel he had so often solicited in his fine conservative speeches in Whitehall Gardens : Mr. Bankes, with a Parliamentary name of two centuries, and Mr. Christopher from that broad Lincolnshire which Protection had created ; and the Mileses and the Henleys were there ; and the Duncombes, the Liddells, and the Yorkes ; and Devon had sent there the stout heart of Mr. Buck—and Wiltshire, the pleasant presence of Walter Long. Mr. Newdegate was there, whom Sir Robert had himself recommended to the confidence of the electors of Warwickshire, as one of whom he had the highest hopes ; and Mr. Alderman Thompson was there, who, also through Sir Robert's selection, had seconded the assault upon the Whigs, led on by Sir John Buller. But the list is too long ; or good names remain behind."

by his new-found friends, by Cobden and by Bright ; let him be the ark of the national covenant against which but one sacrilegious arm was raised ; and that arm a traitor's. "It is still more surprising," added the minister, "that if such were his views of my character, he should have been ready, as I think he was, to unite his fortunes with mine in office, thereby implying the strongest proof which a public man can give of confidence in the honour and integrity of a minister of the Crown."

Thus was Disraeli's letter of application for office under Sir Robert in 1841 flung into the arena in 1846. After five years' lapse of time, after the change of Sir Robert's policy, after the cumulative effect of the "appropriations" which long climax had brought to their acme, Disraeli must have felt at once the injustice of this sort of allusion to his open and honourable support of the Minister in earlier years. The mere fact that the Minister had brought into debate a confidential letter, with no bearing whatever on the current difficulty his own recantation had created, was scarcely to that Minister's credit ; for such interchanges between a leader and his followers are commonly regarded as "under seal." Disraeli, therefore, had no need whatever to seek shelter under that denial of having "sought to unite his fortunes" with Peel's which he proceeded to make in words that it is better to quote in full from *Hansard* :



“Mr. Speaker, the right honourable gentleman having made an insinuation against me, which the cheer of his supporters opposite showed me had conveyed a very erroneous impression, I think the House will feel that under these circumstances it is not presumptuous in me to ask a moment’s attention to a subject so peculiarly personal as the insinuation of the right honourable gentlemen. I understand the insinuation of the right honourable gentleman, if it meant anything, to be this—that my opposition, or, as he called it, my envenomed opposition to him, was occasioned by my being disappointed of office. Now, having been for five years in Opposition to the late Government, an active, though I well know not an influential, supporter of the right honourable gentleman, and having been favoured by him with an acknowledgment of his sense of my slight services, I do not think there would have been anything dishonourable for me if, when the new Government was formed in 1841, I had been an applicant for office. It might have been in good taste or not, but at least there would have been nothing dishonourable; but I can assure the House nothing of the kind ever occurred. I never shall—it is totally foreign to my nature—make an application for any place. But in 1841, when the Government was formed—I am sorry to touch upon such a matter, but insinuations have been made by paragraphs in the newspapers, and now by charges in this House—I



have never adverted to the subject, but when these charges are made I must—in 1841, when the Government was formed, an individual possessing, as I believed him to possess, the most intimate and complete confidence of the right honourable gentleman called on me and communicated with me. There was certainly some conversation—I have never adverted to these circumstances, and should not now unless compelled, because they were under a seal of secrecy confided to me. There was some communication, not at all of that nature which the House perhaps supposes, between the right honourable gentleman and me, but of the most amicable kind. I can only say this—it was a transaction not originated by me, but one which any gentleman, I care not how high his honour or spirit, might entertain to-morrow. I need not go into my conduct consequent on that occasion. If I took my course in this House according to the malevolent insinuations made, I do not mean by the right honourable gentleman, but by others, and now they are sneered at by him. ('Oh, oh!') Some person says, 'Oh, oh!' If I thought the majority of the House believed that I was under the influence of motives of this character when I rose, I certainly should never rise again in this House. ('Question!') This is the question—it is a fair personal explanation. I say a communication was made to me—not authorised by the right honourable gentleman—he is not fond of authorising

people—but a communication was made to me—though no doubt there may have been mistakes and misconceptions. But with reference to the course I afterwards followed, I declare I never took a decided step until my constituents, in consequence of the pledges I had given in 1843, called upon me for a definite opinion on Protection. This was two years after the circumstances of which I have spoken took place. I then gave a silent vote against the policy of the right honourable gentleman. The year after that I opposed him, but no one could call it an envenomed opposition. The instant I did that, these rumours were circulated. The right honourable gentleman, I dare say, alluded in a moment of inadvertence or great irritation to this subject. ('Oh, oh!') To me it is perfectly immaterial, whatever he may have intended. There is a line between public and private communications. It was not till I took that course that these rumours were circulated. A gentleman, a member of this House, who has allowed me to mention his name, told me that a member of the Government—I believe a member of the Government—told him that a Cabinet Minister had a letter in his pocket from me, asking for the ministry at Madrid, and that it would be read aloud the next time I attacked the Government. These rumours were always circulated—they were put forward directly or indirectly—but I can say that I never asked a favour of the Government,

not even one of those mechanical things which persons are obliged to ask ; yet these assertions were always made in that way, though I never asked a favour ; and, as regards myself, I never, directly or indirectly, solicited office. Anything more unfounded than the rumour circulated to-night, that my opposition to the right honourable gentleman has ever been influenced by such considerations, there cannot be. (Interruption.) If my explanation be not satisfactory, it is only because I am prevented from making it. But I have only one observation to make. It is very possible if, in 1841, I had been offered office, I dare say it would have been a very slight office, but I dare say I should have accepted it. I have not that high opinion of myself to suppose that the more important offices of the Government would have been offered to my acceptance ; but I can only say I am very glad I did not accept it. But with respect to my being a solicitor of office, it is entirely unfounded. Whatever occurred in 1841 between the right honourable gentleman and myself was entirely attributable to the intervention of another gentleman whom I supposed to be in the confidence of the right honourable baronet, and I dare say it may have arisen from a misconception. But I do most unequivocally and upon my honour declare that I never have for a moment been influenced by such considerations in the House."

Then Sir Robert rose again :



"The honourable gentleman," he said, "has not correctly stated what I said. I did not say that he was influenced in his opposition by personal motives. The words I said were these : If he, reviewing my political life previously to 1841, which was of the duration of thirty years, really believed that I deserved the character he gave of me to-night, then it was not right that in 1841 he should accept me as a leader, and not only accept me as a leader, but that he should have intimated to me that he was not unwilling to give that proof of confidence that would have been implied by the acceptance of office."

Much had happened in those five intervening years for Disraeli. He had pressed into them more effort than five decades in the lives of common men absorb. But how could anything have effaced from that active mind the memory that he had solicited "recognition" from Peel? How have forgotten Peel's cutting reception of that solicitation? If originally, in his own mind, he refined between "recognition" and office, and had hugged that subtlety meanwhile for a covering to his own confusion, we are aware, with the letters before us, that any such distinction of terms has no more definite form than that of a flattering prepossession. Disraeli's words imply that Lord Lyndhurst, his political godfather, spoke to Peel, either before or after the letter was sent from Grosvenor Gate, as, indeed, was likely enough to be



the case ; and the letter itself may easily have been written at Lord Lyndhurst's suggestion, private at the time, though prudently divulged in 1846. Even so, and at best, as a statement of fact, Disraeli's words betray an unwonted want of perspicuity. On the main point they are misleading ; since he repudiates any direct application for office. The oblique blow struck at him came as out of the darkness ; it had no force or sting in it if faced. But it had all the ring and intent of a grave accusation ; and Disraeli, in meeting it, showed an ambling unpreparedness.

Among minor uncertainties, one thing seems certain : Disraeli cannot at once have remembered his letter and have intended to deny it. Those who will allow him the meanness to do so, must yet hesitate to allow him the folly. Were his letter read, he had nothing to lose ; why then should he deny it, when that denial was likely to be followed by exposure, and exposure by ruin ? It has been said that he could give Peel the lie calmly, knowing that he could count on Peel's magnanimity not to convict him by the production of the document. That, of course, is wild talk. Peel was too great a Parliamentarian ("the greatest member of Parliament who ever lived," Disraeli long afterwards called him) not to have the instinct to put upon the table the letter he had cited. The very rules of the House indicated that procedure. And, indeed, in

the small hours of the morning following the debate he was found by one of his household fishing in a sea of papers. Told he should be in bed, he replied he was looking for Disraeli's letter ; but he could not find it. The story of his sitting with the letter in his pocket, challenged to produce it, yet withholding it out of good feeling for his opponent, is one for which baffled common sense has the right to demand a reference to chapter and verse. The publication of the letters, once found, was inevitable ; and was felt to be so by Lord Rowton, without whose permission they could not have been printed. That permission he gave in good faith, in full confidence, and, so to say, with nothing up his sleeve ; and I commit no breach of trust in adding that among the unpublished papers of Lord Beaconsfield nothing is found to shed more light on what must therefore always remain an obscured and doubtful passage in Disraeli's long and strenuous political history.

Meanwhile, readers will follow, with quick sympathy, the impulse behind the words which Mr. Augustine Birrell, too easily adopting the Peel "magnanimity" theory, and even the Disraeli-Adventurer theory, delivers from the enemy's camp :

"What Peel magnanimously in the heat of conflict and in the face of insult forbore from doing, Mr. Parker does in 1899. It is of the essence of magnanimity that it should be complete and eternal.

To suppress a document for fifty years and until the man wrote it is dead is no kindness. No good has been done by publication. Disraeli never pretended to be a man of nicety. He ate his peck of dirt and achieved his measure of dignity. In the vulgar struggle for existence Disraeli did some mean and shabby things ; the letter of 1841 was perhaps one of them, the denial of it in 1846 was perhaps another, but a mean and shabby man Disraeli was not, and his reputation, such as it is, stands just where it did before these disclosures. The two letters are out of place in these stately memorials of a saviour of society."

Those, credulous, who join Mr. Birrell in his jaunty admissions of Disraeli's shabbinesses, must be challenged again to produce for the incredulous their chapter and their verse. It is precisely because Disraeli is candid, natural, easy, and self-respecting in the ordinary course of his public and private life, that we decline to conclude, on halting evidence and in defiance of all human probabilities, that he was guilty, in this Peel episode, of a mean and—what is more to the point if you allege him to be a Machiavelli—a purposeless and yet a risky and punishable imposture.

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"They say Peel will never get over my appointment."

That was Disraeli's singularly impersonal report to



his sister when, in the January of 1849, he became Tory leader in the House of Commons. Impersonally aloof even here, he colourlessly records a fact, triumphant in itself for him, tragic in itself for the other. We are spared any "poor" before the Peel, any mark of exclamation thereafter. In the quietness of the passage lies its strength. Time, which never wearies of startling the prig and the pedant with displays of the unexpected, showed Peel, the great Opportunist, that he had missed an opportunity ; and to us has since proved that Disraeli, in wishing to take official work in 1841, was not the victim of self-illusion or of ambition beyond his powers' bounds.

Nor is this "the last phase" of the great Peel-Disraeli antagonism. Peel's active dislike of Disraeli illustrates afresh a very old prejudice against the Unintelligible—it is an incident in the war waged in all lands and ages by Commonplace against Romance. Disraeli at least took pains to understand Peel, in the exercise of a tolerance from which he could not be deterred. Peel's leadership of the Tory party was broken by Disraeli ; but Peel lives for posterity in Disraeli's portrait in the Bentinck biography. The hand that had exchanged buffets with him in sharp public encounter was the hand that has most searchingly and yet most sympathetically studied and reproduced his lineaments. The party rank denied to him by Peel came to him at the hands of others,



and made him, among other things, possible as Peel's appraiser. He was no longer shut out ; the old soreness was healed ; and his magnanimity becomes greatly apparent in his tribute to Peel's. Let us here then piece together fragments to make a perfect whole statue of Peel, far better than that of marble which still turns its back on Disraeli in Parliament Square :

“Nature had combined in Sir Robert Peel many admirable parts. In him a physical frame, incapable of fatigue, was united with an understanding equally vigorous and flexible. He was gifted with the faculty of method in the highest degree ; and with great powers of application which were sustained by a prodigious memory ; while he could communicate his acquisitions with clear and fluent elocution. Such a man, under any circumstances and in any sphere of life, would probably have become remarkable. Ordained from his youth to be busied with the affairs of a great empire, such a man, after long years of observation, practice, and perpetual discipline would have become what Sir Robert Peel was in the latter portion of his life, a transcendent administrator of public business and a matchless master of debate in a popular assembly. In the course of time the method which was natural to Sir Robert Peel had matured into a habit of such expertness that no one in the despatch of affairs ever adapted the means more fitly to the end ; his original flexibility had ripened into consummate

tact ; his memory had accumulated such stores of political information that he could bring luminously together all that was necessary to establish or to illustrate a subject ; while in the House of Commons he was equally eminent in exposition and in reply : in the first, distinguished by his arrangement, his clearness, and his completeness ; in the second, ready, ingenious, and adroit, prompt in detecting the weak points of his adversary and dexterous in extricating himself from an embarrassing position. Thus gifted and thus accomplished, Sir Robert Peel had a great deficiency ; he was without imagination. Wanting imagination, he wanted prescience. No one was more sagacious when dealing with the circumstances before him ; no one penetrated the present with more acuteness and accuracy. His judgment was faultless provided he had not to deal with the future. Thus it happened through his long career, that while he always was looked upon as the most prudent and safest of leaders, he ever, after a protracted display of admirable tactics, concluded his campaigns by surrendering at discretion. He was so adroit that he could prolong resistance even beyond its term, but so little foreseeing that often in the very triumph of his manœuvres he found himself in an untenable position. And so it came to pass that Roman Catholic Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, and the Abrogation of our Commercial System, were all carried in haste or in passion and without con-

ditions or mitigatory arrangements. Sir Robert Peel had a peculiarity which is perhaps natural with men of very great talents who have not the creative faculty ; he had a dangerous sympathy with the creations of others. Instead of being cold and wary, as was commonly supposed, he was impulsive and even inclined to rashness. When he was ambiguous, unsatisfactory, reserved, tortuous, it was that he was perplexed, that he did not see his way, that the routine which he had admirably administered failed him, and that his own mind was not constructed to create a substitute for the custom which was crumbling away. Then he was ever on the look-out for new ideas, and when he embraced them he did so with eagerness and often with precipitancy ; he always carried these novel plans to an extent which even their projectors or chief promoters had usually not anticipated ; as was seen for example in the settlement of the currency. Although apparently wrapped up in himself and supposed to be egotistical, except in seasons of rare exaltation, as in the years 1844-5, when he reeled under the favour of the Court, the homage of the Continent, and the servility of Parliament, he was really deficient in self-confidence.

“After a great disaster it was observable of Sir Robert Peel that his mind seemed always to expand. His life was one of perpetual education. No one more clearly detected the mistakes which he had made or changed his course under such



circumstances with more promptness ; but it was the past and the present that alone engrossed his mind. After the catastrophe of '30, he broke away from the Duke of Wellington and announced to his friends with decision that henceforth he would serve under no man. There are few things more remarkable in Parliamentary history than the manner in which Sir Robert Peel headed an Opposition for ten years without attempting to form the opinions of his friends or instilling into them a single guiding principle, but himself displaying all that time on every subject of debate wise counsels, administrative skill, and accomplished powers of discussion. He could give to his friends no guiding principle, for he had none, and he kept sitting on those benches till somebody should give him one.

"After destroying the Tory party in 1846, he fell a-thinking again over the past and the present as he did after his fall in '30, and again arrived at a great conclusion. In '30 he said he would act no longer as a subordinate ; in '46 he said he would act no longer as a partisan. . . . No one knew better than Sir Robert Peel that without party connexion that Parliamentary government which he so much admired would be intolerable ; it would be at the same time the weakest and the most corrupt government in the world. In casting this slur upon party, Sir Robert Peel meant only to degrade the combinations of which he had experience and by which he had risen. Excluded from power





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THE MONUMENT IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Designed by Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A.

[To face p. 386.]



which he ought to have wielded for a quarter of a century, he sate on his solitary bench revolving the past. At sixty he began to comprehend his position. The star of Manchester seemed as it were to rise from the sunset of Oxford, and he felt he had sacrificed his natural career to an obsolete education and a political system for which he could not secure even an euthanasia. Sir Robert Peel had a bad manner, of which he was sensible; he was by nature very shy; but, forced early in life into eminent positions, he had formed an artificial manner, haughtily stiff or exuberantly bland, of which generally speaking he could not divest himself. There were, however, occasions when he did succeed in this, and on these, usually when he was alone with an individual whom he wished to please, his manner was not only unaffectedly cordial but he could even charm. When he was ridiculed by his opponents in '41, as one little adapted for a Court, and especially the Court of a Queen, those who knew him well augured different results from his high promotion, and they were right. But generally speaking, he was never at his ease and never very content except in the House of Commons. Even there he was not natural, though there the deficiency was compensated for by his unrivalled facility, which passed current with the vulgar eye for the precious quality for which it was substituted. He had obtained a complete control over his temper, which was by nature somewhat fiery. His dis-

position was good ; there was nothing petty about him ; he was very free from rancour ; he was not only not vindictive, but partly by temperament and still more perhaps by discipline, he was even magnanimous. For so very clever a man he was deficient in the knowledge of human nature. The prosperous routine of his youth was not favourable to the development of this faculty. It was never his lot to struggle ; although forty years in Parliament, it is remarkable that Sir Robert Peel never represented a popular constituency or stood a contested election. As he advanced in life he was always absorbed in thought ; and abstraction is not friendly to a perception of character, or to a fine appreciation of the circumstances of the hour. . . . After the Reform of the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel was naturally anxious to discover who was to be the rival of his life, and it is noticeable that he was not successful in his observations. He never did justice to Lord John Russell until he found Lord John was not only his rival, but his successful one, and then, according to his custom and his nature, he did the present Minister of England full justice.<sup>1</sup> No person could be more sensible of the grave import of the events in Canada which occurred on his accession to office in '34 than Sir Robert Peel. They were the com-

<sup>1</sup> "Lord John Russell has written me a very charming letter about the *Political Biography*," wrote Disraeli to his sister, January 26th, 1852.



mencement of great calamities and occasioned him proportionate anxiety. It was obvious that everything depended on the character of the individual sent out by the metropolis to encounter this emergency. The highest qualities of administration were demanded. After much pondering, Sir Robert selected the amiable and popular Lord Canterbury. It was entirely his own selection, and it was perhaps the most unfit that could be made. But Sir Robert Peel associated Lord Canterbury with the awful authority of twenty years of the Speaker's chair. That authority had controlled him, and of course he thought it must subdue the Canadians. It was like a grown-up man in the troubles of life going back for advice to his schoolmaster. . . . As an orator Sir Robert Peel had perhaps the most available talent that has ever been brought to bear in the House of Commons. We have mentioned that both in exposition and in reply he was equally eminent. His statements were perspicuous, complete, and dignified; when he combated the objections or criticised the propositions of an opponent, he was adroit and acute; no speaker ever sustained a process of argumentation in a public assembly more lucidly, and none as debaters have united in so conspicuous a degree of prudence with promptness. In the higher effects of oratory he was not successful. His vocabulary was ample and never mean; but it was neither rich nor rare. His speeches will afford no sentiment

of surpassing grandeur or beauty that will linger in the ears of coming generations. He embalmed no great political truth in immortal words. His flights were ponderous ; he soared with the wing of the vulture rather than the plume of the eagle ; and his perorations when most elaborate were most unwieldy. In pathos he was quite deficient ; when he attempted to touch the tender passions, it was painful. His face became distorted, like that of a woman who wants to cry but cannot succeed. Orators certainly should not shed tears, but there are moments when, as the Italians say, the voice should weep. The taste of Sir Robert Peel was highly cultivated, but it was not originally fine ; he had no wit ; but he had a keen sense of the ridiculous and an abundant vein of genuine humour. Notwithstanding his artificial reserve, he had a hearty and a merry laugh ; and sometimes his mirth was uncontrollable. He was gifted with an admirable organ ; perhaps the finest that has been heard in the House in our days, unless we except the thrilling tones of O'Connell. Sir Robert Peel also modulated his voice with great skill. His enunciation was very clear, though somewhat marred by provincialisms. His great deficiency was want of nature, which made him often appear even with a good cause more plausible than persuasive and more specious than convincing. He may be said to have gradually introduced a new style into the House of Commons which was suited to the age

in which he chiefly flourished and to the novel elements of the assembly which he had to guide. He had to deal with greater details than his predecessors, and he had in many instances to address those who were deficient in previous knowledge. Something of the lecture, therefore, entered into his displays. This style may be called the didactic."

In the next passage, as in one that has gone before, we seem to get autobiography rather than biography ; and close as we are to Peel, we are closer to Disraeli :

"It is often mentioned by those political writers who on such a subject communicate to their readers their theories and not their observations of facts, that there was little sympathy between Sir Robert Peel and the great aristocratic party of which he was the leader ; that on the one side there was a reluctant deference, and on the other a guidance without sentiment. But this was quite a mistake. An aristocracy hesitates before it yields its confidence, but it never does so grudgingly. In political connexions under such circumstances the social feeling mingles and the principle of honour which governs gentlemen. Such a following is usually cordial and faithful. An aristocracy is rather apt to exaggerate the qualities and magnify the importance of a plebeian leader. They are prompted to do this both by a natural feeling of self-love and by a sentiment of generosity. Far from any coldness



subsisting between Sir Robert Peel and the great houses which had supported him through his long career, there never was a minister who was treated with such nice homage, it may be said with such affectionate devotion. The proudest in the land were prouder to be his friends, and he returned the feeling to its full extent and in all its sincerity."

The sketch of Peel's personal appearance is then drawn by a master-hand :

"Sir Robert Peel was a very good-looking man. He was tall and, though of latter years he had become portly, had to the last a comely presence. Thirty years ago, when he was young and lithe with curling brown hair, he had a very radiant expression of countenance. His brow was very distinguished, not so much for its intellectual development, although that was of a very high order, as for its remarkably frank expression, so different from his character in life. The expression of the brow might even be said to amount to beauty. The rest of the features did not, however, sustain this impression. The eye was not good ; it was sly, and he had an awkward habit of looking askance. He had the fatal defect also of a long upper lip, and his mouth was compressed. One cannot say of Sir Robert Peel, notwithstanding his unrivalled powers of despatching affairs, that he was the greatest minister that this country ever produced, because, twice placed at the helm, and on the



second occasion with the Court and the Parliament equally devoted to him, he never could maintain himself in power. Nor, notwithstanding his consummate Parliamentary tactics, can he be described as the greatest party leader that ever flourished among us, for he contrived to destroy the most compact, powerful, and devoted party that ever followed a British statesman. Certainly, notwithstanding his great sway in debate, we cannot recognise him as our greatest orator, for in many of the supreme requisites of oratory he was singularly deficient. But what he really was, and what posterity will acknowledge him to have been, is the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived.

"Peace to his ashes ! His name will be often appealed to in that scene which he loved so well, and never without homage even by his opponents !"



**"Adventurer"**

[LONDON,]

"June 19th, 1834.

"I have had great success in society this year. I am as popular with the dandies as I was hated by the second-rate men. I make my way easily in the highest set, where there is no envy, malice, etc., and where they like to admire and be amused."  
—*Home Letter.*

Just as the close borough was made a political advantage to the State by the return of young men

of genius who would not have met at the hands of a crowd the recognition they received from a magnate—so, too, the great world, set above social strivings, was able to take to itself the Alien, and to fear no consequences. The people in the crowd, the Crokers, the Haywards, and the Bullers, had to jostle and push, if this young man was to be kept out of the Royal enclosure so long as they were not admitted within. Yet even among “the great,” political and religious, if not social, prejudice had to be encountered. “My parents, I believe, regarded Dizzy as little better, if better, than an adventurer,” says Lord Ronald Gower. But as he only “believes,” and is not sure, we give that Duke and Duchess of Sutherland the benefit of the doubt. Their successors at Stafford House offered Disraeli hospitality at the end of his life. To Lord Selborne, Disraeli was “an actor in a mask he never took off”: what lawyers in general, and a certain Lord Chancellor in particular, were to Disraeli, has been already set forth. If Disraeli did not please the “High,” neither did he please the “Low,” so that Lord Shaftesbury, surnamed the “Good,” esteemed him “a leper without principle, without feeling, without regard to anything, human or divine, beyond his personal ambition.” This, too, was the opinion I long ago heard expressed in almost similar words by John Bright—the John Bright whom Lord Shaftesbury found it disagreeable to meet because he was

not a gentleman. Here, at any rate, in opinion, gentlemanly or not, they did meet, and even embrace. Whether Bright, had he lived longer, would have been converted to Disraeli, may be doubted; but Lord Shaftesbury, introducing a deputation of workmen to Lord Beaconsfield, on his elevation, to thank him for his services to Labour during his career in the Lower House of Parliament, seemed to be in a softened mood. Disraeli, who had once been stung into an allusion to the "phylacteries" of Lord Shaftesbury, was of course happy in paying to him at last a tribute that takes count of all his virtues and ignores all his defects. He, the misunderstood, could understand; and ready as men were to misjudge him, even more ready was he to forgive. That he felt a general soreness, however, about this method of prejudicing him, early and late, is certain.

"Now, gentlemen," he said in 1850, "I have had some experience in public life, and during that time I have seen a great deal done, and more pretended, by what are called 'moral' means; and, being naturally of a thoughtful temperament, I have been induced to analyse what 'moral' means are. I will tell you what I have found them to consist of: first, enormous lying; second, inexhaustible boasting; third, intense selfishness."

The cartoons that illustrated the popular air—and that was "adventurer"—in *Punch* week by week produced



from him no word except the word that secured a pension for the widow of the lampooner. All the weary round the legend went. His own uncle, Mr. Basevi, the Parliamentary lawyer, utters it under his breath ; and Medicine chimes in when Sir William Gull is asked by somebody at the Athenæum Club why on earth Disraeli should trust himself to the hands of a quack (naming a homœopathic doctor), and the allopath replies : "*Similia similibus curantur.*" One need not trace the legend further : it had its natural birth in an Island that suspects strangers, yet showed itself receptive enough in the long run to allow itself to be ruled by Disraeli. His own hand has indicated the difference between Parisian homage to intellect and London's long distrust of it. He knew that wit itself is sometimes reckoned an offence. "A great man in England is generally the dullest" is his own deliberate word. Yet perhaps London, slower than Paris to receive, will be slower to forget, and the primrose festival may still flourish when the violet festival of Disraeli's old friend has fallen into disuse. The Tory party may be "the stupid party" that Mr. Bright said they were, and they might need to be "educated," as Disraeli said he had educated them to Household Suffrage. All the more may they now put forward their claim to receptiveness in the recognition of merit where merit was least likely to be apparent to hedge-bound eyes. Disraeli overcame all distrust of



him as an alien. He was the idol of the Tories when he died.

No doubt the constantly bruited-about story that Disraeli began life without political convictions aggravated the distrust initially felt for an alien. That legend dies hard. I take up a recent book of *Memoirs*, those of Sir Edward Blount, who begins a passage with the alluring statement, "I knew Disraeli for many years." Sir Edward goes on to say that he first met the future Prime Minister during the general election of 1841, when Disraeli stood for Shrewsbury, a town in which Sir Edward's family—the owners of Mawley Hall in Shropshire—took a neighbourly interest. Sir Edward, writing as a Liberal, tells the story thus :—

"Disraeli, who had formerly sat for Maidstone, was on this occasion returned for Shrewsbury in the Liberal interest. The contest had been a particularly warm one, and, in order to celebrate our triumph, we had a public dinner, with Disraeli in the chair. The usual patriotic toasts were followed by that to which Disraeli, who was expected to make the speech of the evening, was to reply, 'The Members for the County.' As soon as the new member was called upon to speak, a man in the company rose and got on to the table. He spoke violently and in a loud discordant voice, and, pointing to the table of honour, at which it happened thirteen were sitting, exclaimed

with great heat, 'Wherever thirteen men sit down to dinner, there is a traitor amongst them,' and then with a sudden gesture of contempt, he turned to the guest of the evening and added, 'There sits the man!' It is impossible for me to describe the commotion which ensued. The man was instantly pulled down and expelled ignominiously from the room. Disraeli rose to speak, but was powerless to quell the tumult. The turmoil grew into an open fight, and the proceedings ended abruptly in the utmost confusion. It so happened that a very short time afterwards Disraeli changed his politics and his party, and so the prophecy became true."

The bare fact is that Disraeli stood as a Tory, not as a Liberal, for Shrewsbury in 1841, and as a Tory was returned, together with Mr. Tomline, Q.C. There was a banquet indeed, but it was a Tory banquet, at which Mr. Disraeli, cheered to the echo at every point, told his supporters that "he had that day had the satisfaction of writing to Sir Robert Peel to inform him that Shrewsbury had done its duty. It would revive the hon. baronet's hopes and add to his confidence to know the ancient town of Shrewsbury had responded to his call." How account for the detailed hallucinations of that being, beloved of the historian, the eye- and ear-witness? One can only surmise, so much nonsense being talked about Disraeli in those days, that men actually

began to believe the stories that passed from mouth to mouth ; nay, even to think they had themselves been present at scenes which never were. Lady Ashburton used to say that as a child she declared she remembered being present at her mother's wedding ; and that, though she was whipped for making the statement, she never ceased to believe it. It is equally difficult to divest the Sir Edward Blounts in Disraelian annals of the imaginings that make the fancy portrait in their own inner minds.

Regarding the careers and acts of the politicians who preceded, accompanied, and followed Disraeli—all the contortions, conversions, and coalitions of Burke, Peel, Aberdeen, Palmerston, Stanley, Gladstone, and Chamberlain—we recognise how hard it is to affix to the bales of political merchandise the decisive labels of Whig and Tory, and may well ask with Lady Teazle : "Don't you think we might leave consistency out of the question ?" Nature herself is a perennial inconsistency. The march of events, the growth in the consciousness of the world, the awakening of Science and that quick and moving spirit which the poets and the thinkers, the seers and the sayers, have sent forth ; these are forces which cannot be ignored by any leader of men. By the leader of men, moreover, they must be seen and accepted more than by his fellows. They must be verified by the experiences of his own individual growth, transforming



dream into certainty, theory into conviction. To such a man mutation is not tergiversation ; development is not departure, the step forward—or the step aside, at moments the step backward, even a feint of flight—is all part of steady spiral progress upward. “Much has happened since then” is a colloquialism in which Disraeli flung across the floor of the House of Commons the burden of his philosophy of political life. Disraeli distrusted the morality of people who talked of their own moral aims. Hence one hesitates to claim the Good of the People—the people’s health and the people’s mental, even more than material, progress—as the object which Disraeli the publicist kept close in view, from the early days of his candidature at Wycombe to the last hour of his life. With the humbug of hustings speeches in our ears, we pause on such facile words : they are murmurs of hypocrisy, reminiscent of the fooleries that pass as the accepted conventions of that “dull trade” of politics wherever the ear of the Islanders in multitude must be flattered and tickled.

To what extent Disraeli consented to play that game, to take advantage of ruse and phrase to harass or to nonplus his opponents, is an enthralling study enough, especially during his mid-career ; but it is a study that pertains rather to the public life of England than to his own individual history. Party government was the only instrument to his



hand. He began with an effort for freedom from party trammels, and could not find a Nationalist, rather than a Whig or a Tory, seat. In his mid-career Disraeli the man and cosmopolitan went now and again in the custody of Disraeli the leader of Tories who would not, perhaps could not, dance at a moment's notice to a new piping—some had no ear for music, others did not recognise the tune. But if, on the matter of Reform for instance, Disraeli moved slowly, hoping that the weakest man of his regiment might so keep step, and applied his chain of followers to the control of social forces with an eye on its weakest link, never did he allow party exigency to embarrass his opponents when England's fame or safety was in question, never in war-time was he other than a Nationalist indeed. And this shall be said by any student of the half-century of politics his career covers : that his opponents throughout were cleverer than he at the game of bluff ; not that they knew the constituencies better, but that they were more willing than he to pander to popular passions ; readier to confuse issues, to play to the pocket under guise of feeding the soul, to give high names to low motives, to secure a vicious success in the name of virtue, to confound a mundane plea with a message from heaven, and to adopt towards opponents in success the bearing of martyrs ; in defeat, of the Lord's avengers. By these means were compassed

his confusion and that of his host, at the close of his career.

Very awkward are the consequences of this form of fanaticism in public affairs. "I doubt if any man ever lived in this country who was more systematically calumniated and misrepresented than Lord Beaconsfield," Lord George Hamilton has said. "It really seemed at one time as if there were a conspiracy amongst a certain number of people to misrepresent everything he said and to misinterpret everything he did. So, little by little, by this dint of constant reiteration, an impression was formed outside, by those who did not know Lord Beaconsfield's character, objects, and past career, utterly at variance from truth. He was represented as a cynical, reckless man, thinking only of his aggrandisement, and ready for that purpose to involve his country in war. I had the honour of the most personal acquaintance with him, and I can say this truly—that I never met a kinder man in private, nor a more patriotic and prescient man in his public capacity."



*"Sybil; or, The Two Nations"*

*To a Reviewer of "Sybil."*

"GROSVENOR GATE,

"June 2nd [1845].

"I was in hopes, all yesterday, that I might have been able in person to thank you for your

I was in hopes, all  
yestern, that I might  
have been able in  
person to thank you  
for your charming  
letter of 17<sup>th</sup> April, &  
Many

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM DISRAELI TO A REVIEWER OF SYBIL.

pleasing to its author  
in every respect - &  
now I fear very  
difficult to get much  
to be made of it, perhaps,  
as, after numerous  
miraculous escapes,  
I

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM DISRAELI TO A REVIEWER OF SYBIL.



I am begged from  
Railway Committee  
Wh: be easy  
prospects of rilly  
every day this June  
+ July!  
Yours faithfully  
D.  
S.B.  
June 2

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM DISRAELI TO A REVIEWER OF SYBIL.

charming notice of *Sybil*, so pleasing to its author in every respect, and now I fear my visit to you must be indefinitely postponed, as, after numerous miraculous escapes, I am bagged for a Railway Committee which has every prospect of sitting every day through June and July!

“Yours faithfully,

“D.”

“In *Sybil*; or, *The Two Nations*, I considered the Condition of the People. At that time the Chartist agitation was still fresh in the public memory, and its repetition was far from improbable. I had mentioned to my friend, the late Thomas Duncombe, who was my friend before I entered the House of Commons, something of what I was contemplating, and he offered and obtained for my perusal the whole of the correspondence of Feargus O'Connor, when conductor of the *Northern Star*, with the leaders and chief actors of the Chartist movement. I had visited and observed with care all the localities introduced; and as an accurate and never exaggerated picture of a remarkable period in our domestic history the pages of *Sybil* may, I venture to believe, be consulted with confidence.”

That was Disraeli's own retrospective glance at a book which even those readers who place *Tancred* or *Coningsby* before it, must allow to be the one that

has exercised the greatest influence upon the national life. In its way it is as autobiographical a book as *Contarini Fleming* ; we get at the very heart of Disraeli in it as a politician. Among the people of leisure and pleasure, he, one of themselves, is the pioneer of social regeneration—that new birth which aimed at giving to all English-born people the opportunity to live decently. “Talk of heaven, why, you are not fit for earth,” Thoreau was crying out in New England against the desecrators of the mere soil. It was a human as well as a physical deformation which manufacturing England had to answer for ; and in the case of Christians, surely it was something more. God is our Father ; heaven our home ; the dearest Christian mysteries are associated with maternity, with the love of husband and wife, the love proceeding between father and son. In simple truth, the ancient Hebrews had furnished us with a code of heaven to which modern England had lost the key. It did not know these things ; and not without influence on the vitalising of domesticities, human and divine, was that Hebrew tradition which Disraeli inherited, and, in completing and supplementing it, did not abandon. Moses, as it seemed, found a successor in this modern lawgiver. Others, sick at heart at sight of the oppression of the Poor, prompted them to rebel ; others sought in confusion, even in social peril, an escape from the thralldom of a life of

inaction. His was another rôle—that of teaching the Rich to make restitution ; the Poor to be powerful in patience.

“The people are not strong”—this was his social creed in the year 1845, the year when Newman was putting kindred thoughts of religious concord into practice by his accession to the Church of Rome—“the people never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, and is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. There is a dayspring in the history of this nation which perhaps those only who are on the mountain-top can as yet recognise. The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, nor oppressors. Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their position. But the work that is before them is no holiday work ; it is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barrier of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened ; time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the people ; believe me, they are the only ones.” Those awakened sympathies, awakened not a moment too soon, were of Disraeli’s awakening. He roused them from a sleep which was nearly that of death. Dives and Lazarus were put upon the new



terms ; and with Dives was the greater change ; so that now scarce a great family in the land but yields, one way or another, a worker for the weak. Every village has its Lady Bountiful ; and Whitechapel itself something more than its amazing " Whitechapel Countess " of Mr. Meredith's fiction—a Duchess who is daughter to Disraeli's friend Henry Hope, and who, in the Commercial Road, fulfils the ambition born in those glades of Deepdene which the dedication page of *Coningsby* commemorates. Between that literary dedication and this dedication of a life, one delights to trace common affinities. For it was Disraeli's luck that the men and women about him, or their descendants, were raised up to translate his words and wishes into deeds. No need to name the Rowton Houses, which show how one man could provide uncostly but honourable shelter to a vast class while Governments and Councils talked of the difficulties of doing it. It was Disraeli's friend, the Granby of his early letters, who, becoming Duke of Rutland, was the earliest of great landowners to give tenants that system of Allotments which was to be put to practical test again, a generation later, by Disraeli's neighbours, the Caringtons. There was Lord John Manners himself at hand, " the Philip Sidney of our generation " in chivalrous outlook on life ; one who had many thoughts, and all for others ; the promoter of those National Holidays, denied to him, but granted later

to men who better understood the commercial instincts of the Islanders, and asked in the name of the Bankers the boon that was grudged when asked in the name of a saint. The passwords of the Counting House have supplanted those of the Cathedral. Lord John, too, was leader of that friendly combat between gentle and simple on the cricket ground which has since been transformed almost into a National Institution. The Factory Acts were carried by such men as these, in the teeth of the manufacturers of the Manchester School : were carried by such men as Disraeli's friend, Bousfield Ferrand, the "Tory John Bright" as he was called ; but John Bright was all against the dictation of the State to masters (he, one of them) for the regulation of hours of work and ages of workers, or for the sheathing of the machinery that made mincemeat of their limbs. Let us not suppose that selfishness drops off a man like a slough when he passes the portals of St. Stephen's. Disraeli, as keen to create a Country party that could curb the greed of towns as the Manchester School was to get cheap bread (and pay lower wages in consequence) even at the ruin of the land, went to Manchester, and there learned the lesson that may be familiar enough now, but was new to those who were witnesses to the mushroom rise of towns sown over England by machinery, the steam-engine most of all. And the mention of towns reminds us that, in a later

generation, Disraeli's own Lothair set the example of civic service, planning his town of Cardiff on a system, and wearing the mayoral robes and the chain of office (chased under his own eye)—the first of the “gentlemen” who, as Disraeli said, had no claim to exist except as leaders of the people.

*Sybil ; or, The Two Nations*, was published in 1845, its motto a sentence from Bishop Latimer in reproach of the classes : “The Commonalty murmured and said, ‘There never were so many gentlemen and so little gentleness.’” It was dated “May Day”—a date with a reminiscence in it—and from Grosvenor Gate, within sight of all that is brilliant in the beginnings of a London season. It made its appeal, not to the talking politician, not to the smart reviewer ; it was not in touch at all with the trade of politics. But it went, where Mrs. Browning's *Cry of the Children* went, to the heart of the amateur ; and may be said to have sown the seed which, a generation later, was to yield an abundant harvest in the gentleness of the prosperous towards the dependent. But how to get men to hear the new social evangel ? Any one versed in the memoirs of the time remembers what deaf ears men had for all they did not want to hear ; a halter or a manacle were Park Lane's machinery for dealing with popular discontent under difficulties facing men from the growth of population, the rise of the towns, the great inventions and



movements that superseded manual toil and feudal conditions. Disraeli, if any one, could get a hearing from those dull ears ; he knew the knack ; this blue-book of his was to lie on every table in Park Lane ; and where it then lay it lies even to this hour.

The novel opens on the eve of the Derby in the inaugural Victorian year (1837), and the scene is "a vast and golden saloon that, in its splendour, would not have disgraced Versailles in the days of the Grand Monarch." The club men are betting on the morrow's event as they "consume delicacies for which they have no appetite." "I rather like bad wine," said Mr. Mountchesney ; "one gets so bored with good wine." "I never go anywhere," pleads a "melancholy Cupid," when asked if he has come from a visit. "Everything bores me so," he adds in explanation. To an invitation to join an open-air Derby party—it will "do him good," his proposing host suggests—he replies : "Nothing could do me good : I should be quite content if anything could do me harm." Still applicable also is the more formal indictment of those who, possessing all things, have no joy in any ; and, needing nothing, need all. "They go about from place to place, seeking for some new pleasure. They are weary, but it is with the weariness of satiety." That protest of Mr. Bright against these Splendid Paupers in life's real riches was addressed to—artisans. It was intended to attack a



class behind its back, not to admonish it brotherly. "There is in the midst of us a general population of the poor—I make the acknowledgment with shame and sorrow. In no other country can be found such—I will not call them homes, I will not call them dwelling-places, for they are not fit for human habitation; but hovels in which whole families dwell together, in the corner of a room—such places exist under the eaves of our palaces, from the roofs of which the rain drips upon the roofs covering a population sunk in the depths of physical suffering." That is Cardinal Manning's version of Disraeli's "The dungeon or the den still in courtesy called home"; but the Cardinal addresses only a congregation in a Church, already informed, if not already convinced. The political economist got hardly a better hearing. "I always vote against that d——d 'Intellect,'" said a typical Belgravian, when John Stuart Mill stood for Westminster. But Disraeli's mission was direct—to teach the whole wealthy class its duty to its neighbour; the duty of one nation to another. The novel was a means far better suited to that end than the philippic, the sermon, the treatise. Literary triflers might call the Disraelian novel a tract. Certainly; that was its glory. The novel with a purpose was a Tract for the Time; and it got home. The jam was swallowed and the powder with it, and the body politic knows the difference, though the cure be only partial yet.

The powder, rather than the preserve, is our concern—as it is still England's. The village of Marney, delightfully situated in spreading dales, flanked by lofty hills, is represented to us by Disraeli as a beautiful illusion. "Behind that laughing landscape, penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population." At the great house, robbed by his ancestor from the monks, and therefore from the Poor—(that is a great point always with Disraeli, and sometimes was a sore one with the magnates whom he visited in their alienated Church properties)—all was gorgeous as it was dull. Lord Marney glorified the new Poor Law, and opined that Peel would stand by his class—Lord Marney, whose face was the index of his mind, "cynical, devoid of sentiment, arrogant, literal, hard," a man of no imagination, who "had exhausted his slight native feeling, but was acute, disputatious, and firm even to obstinacy"; a disciple of Helvetius, and one "who always gave you in the business of life the idea of a man who was conscious you" (especially, perhaps, if "you" were an alien Disraeli) "were trying to take him in, and rather respected you for it, but the working of whose cold, unkind eye defied you."

Into the gallery of Disraeli's peers and peeresses go Lord and Lady Marney. Sketches they are; but, like the sketches of a great artist, they are finished at the fleetest touch. "Completion" would be superfluity:

a wanton waste. The "trick" of such portraiture is sometimes said to be easy ; yet few have performed it successfully, and none, perhaps, quite so successfully as Disraeli. Lord Marney as a landlord shall have the first sitting. "I wish," he says to his brother Egremont, who hints at the horrible poverty of the tenantry—"I wish the people were as well off in every part of the country as they are on my estate. They get here their eight shillings a week, always at least seven, and every hand is at this moment in employ, except a parcel of scoundrels who prefer wood-stealing and poaching, and would, if you gave them double the wages. The rate of wages is nothing : certainty is the thing ; and every man at Marney may be sure of his seven shillings a week—for at least nine months of the year ; and, for the other three, they can go to the House, and a very proper place for them ; it is heated with hot air and has every comfort. Even Marney Abbey is not heated with hot air. I have often thought of it ; it makes me mad sometimes to think of those lazy, pampered menials passing their lives with their backs to a great roaring fire ; but I am afraid of the flues." The satire is essential ; it has roots ; it shoots up and it intertwines, as complex as character itself ; you read it between the letters rather than between the lines.

Disraeli does not seek to persuade his readers that



a bad landlord can be a good man. Men do not gather figs of thistles, as he once said, when somebody complained of the *gaucherie* of a Knight of the Thistle. In his relations with his younger brother Egremont (whom the peer introduces to an heiress as his own contribution towards the election bills incurred by the commoner's return for the family borough), we get a study of the selfishness of that seniority which counts for so much in a country favouring primogeniture. And when you come closer and get the bad landlord before you as a husband, you have only this relief—that the Wife and Martyr (a combination to which scant recognition has been accorded in the Church of so many Virgins and Martyrs) has the halo true men ever see her wear in real life; and this must be her consolation—that Disraeli saw it there and did homage accordingly :

“Arabella was a woman of abilities, which she had cultivated. She had excellent sense, and possessed many admirable qualities; she was far from being devoid of sensibility; but her sweet temper shrank from controversy, and Nature had not endowed her with a spirit which could direct and control. She yielded without a struggle to the arbitrary will and unreasonable caprice of a husband, who was scarcely her equal in intellect, and far her inferior in all the genial qualities of our nature, but who governed her by his iron selfishness. Lady Marney absolutely had



no will of her own. A hard, exact, literal, bustling, acute being environed her existence; directed, planned, settled everything. Her life was a series of petty sacrifices and baulked enjoyments. If her carriage were at the door, she was never certain that she would not have to send it away; if she had asked some friends to her house, the chances were she would have to put them off; if she was reading a novel, Lord Marney asked her to copy a letter; if she were going to the opera, she found that Lord Marney had got seats for her and some friend in the House of Lords, and seemed expecting the strongest expressions of delight and gratitude from her for his unasked and inconvenient kindness. Lady Marney had struggled against this tyranny in the earlier days of their union. Innocent, inexperienced Lady Marney! As if it were possible for a wife to contend against a selfish husband, at once sharp-witted and blunt-hearted. She had appealed to him, she had even reproached him; she had wept, once she had knelt. But Lord Marney looked upon these demonstrations as the disordered sensibility of a girl unused to the marriage state, and ignorant of the wise authority of husbands, of which he deemed himself a model. And so, after a due course of initiation—Lady Marney invisible for days, plunged in remorseful reveries in the mysteries of her boudoir, and her lord dining at his club and going to the

minor theatres—the countess was broken in, and became the perfect wife of a perfect husband.”

During a London season, at a great party at Deloraine House, one of those brilliant generalities that are made up of individual dulnesses, we encounter Lord and Lady Marney again:

“Where is Arabella?” inquired Lord Marney of his mother. “I want to present young Huntingford to her. He can be of great use to me, but he bores me so, I cannot talk to him. I want to present him to Arabella.”

In the Blue Drawing-Room she is found. “‘Well,’ says her husband, in concession to his wife’s momentary reluctance to leave agreeable friends, ‘I will bring Huntingford here. Mind you speak to him a great deal; take his arm, and go down to supper with him if you can. He is a very nice sensible young fellow, and you will like him very much, I am sure; a little shy at first, but he only wants bringing out’—dexterous description of one of the most unlicked and unlickable cubs that ever entered society with forty thousand a year; courted by all, and with just that degree of cunning that made him suspicious of every attention.” This second allusion to the stand-off egotism of a “noble” seems again to admit us to a glimpse of early Disraelian autobiography.

The Earl of Marney, who hated nothing so much



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THE MONUMENT IN THE GUILDHALL.

Designed by Richard Belt, 1882.

[To face p. 418.]





as a poacher except a lease, extended his table hospitality to Slimsy, the vicar of the parish, a model priest because he left everybody alone. Once, indeed, under the influence of Lady Marney, there was a threatened ebullition of zeal—new schools and tracts were talked of. But Lord Marney stopped all this. “No priestcraft at Marney,” said this gentle proprietor of abbey lands.

From the peer we pass to the baronet—Sir Vavasour Firebrace, who buttonholes everybody about the grievances of an order he is delighted later to desert for a barony: an Islander without guile—all folly:

“If the [new] Sovereign could only know her best friends,” he said to Egremont, Lord Marney’s younger brother (a Young Englander in politics, and generally said to have had Disraeli himself for his prototype), “she might yet rally round the throne a body of men——” Lord Marney makes a move from the dinner-table to interrupt the stale theme; for a bore who is a bully is ever intolerant of that less pestilent person—a bore who is a goose. But bores, one sort or another, are not so easily burked; and Egremont, in the drawing-room, had again to listen, astonished, to the excited recapitulation of the possible glories of the baronetcy, while the Bloody Hand was laid retainingly upon his arm. “And such a body,” exclaimed Sir Vavasour with animation. “Picture us going down in procession to Westminster to hold

a chapter. Five or six hundred baronets in dark green costume—the appropriate dress of *equites aurati*, each, not only with his badge, but with his collar of S.S., belted and scarfed; his star glittering; his pennon flying; his hat white, with a plume of white feathers; of course the sword and the gilt spurs. In one hand—the thumb ring and the signet not forgotten—we hold our coronet of two balls.”

The satire does not really border on burlesque, it is still within the safe precincts of human fatuity, when Sir Vavasour goes on to describe “the body evidently destined to save this country” as “blending all sympathies—the Crown, of which they are the peculiar champions; the nobles, of whom they are the popular branch; the people, who recognise in them their natural leaders.” The illusion of caste is portrayed alike in Marney and in Firebrace. Men go to public schools to get rid of the caste-consciousness; and we know how some of them come through the purgation with no trace of purification. By their position, by the power of isolation which wealth and station give, and the spoken and looked politeness which these commonly extort, the Marneys and Firebraces go immune. Disraeli followed them up; he opened the eyes of their sons; and if the bores of to-day, still as plentiful as rabbits in Australia, at least begin to be kept somewhat under, the remission is due in great measure to the sport

Disraeli made of them in the books he wrote—and they read. This, as all will admit, is no slight benefaction ; but it is to a yet more vital one that we turn in this tale of Sybil, the daughter of Gerard, Chartist and artisan.

How fared the hamlet gathered round Marney Abbey, how its habitants? “Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble or of unhewn stones without cement, looking as if they could hardly hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast ; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height ; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced ; while in many instances the thatch, utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage. Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through and thoroughly impregnate the walls and ground adjoining. These wretched tenements”—continues a passage which may, with other passages like it, be taken as important documents bearing on the pedigree of to-day’s Sanitary Inspectors and County Councils—“seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were



obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of child-birth gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilisation, surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail: while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined his new-born child. These swarming walls had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun or supply the means of ventilation—the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling-rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and whether it were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river, and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor; the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges; a resting place for infancy in its deluged home.



These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police ; contiguous to every door might be observed the dunghheap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills."

The average term of life in that manufacturing district was seventeen ; more than half the children went out of their misery before they were five ; they came unwelcome and they went unwept. There was little to distinguish human beings from brutes ; in many respects the brutes had the advantage. "The domestic principle waxes weaker and weaker every year in England ; nor can we wonder at it, when there is no comfort to cheer and no sentiment to hallow the home." The Abbey people and the Town people—these are the Two Nations, the Rich and the Poor. Let us fix the time—it was the beginning of that Victorian era which spells so much that history calls glory. Memorable, and helping us to remember seasons, is a passage in this very book : "In a palace in a garden, not in a haughty keep, proud with the fame but dark with the violence of ages,—not in a regal pile, bright with splendour, but soiled with the intrigues of courts and factions ; in a

palace in a garden, meet scene for youth and innocence and beauty, came the voice that told the maiden she must ascend the throne."

Disraeli cannot get away from the evolution of things; he is of the past and of the future as well as of the present, an "all-round man"; no provincial, nor a victim to that twin limitation of time rather than place—no mere opportunist or temporiser, in a new and needed sense of those words. Looking backward, then, Disraeli saw the Abbey, and associated its ruins with the ruined cottages of the peasants. "The eyes of this unhappy race might have been raised to the solitary spire that sprang up in the midst of them, the bearer of present consolation, the harbinger of future equality; but Holy Church at Marney had forgotten her sacred mission." Candles were no longer lighted on its altars; instead, as Disraeli saw, hayricks were set ablaze outside by incendiary hands.

"Over a space of not less than ten acres might still be observed the fragments of the great Abbey: these were, towards their limit, in general moss-grown and mouldering memorials that told where once rose the offices and spread the terraced gardens of the old proprietors; here might still be traced the dwelling of the Lord Abbot; and there, still more distinctly, because built on a greater scale and of materials still more intended for perpetuity, the

capacious hospital, a name that did not then denote the dwelling of disease, but a place where all the rights of hospitality were practised ; where the traveller, from the proud baron to the lonely pilgrim, asked the shelter and the succour that never was denied, and at whose gate, called the Portal of the Poor, the peasants on the Abbey lands, if in want, might appeal each morn and night for raiment and for food. But it was in the centre of the tract of ruins, occupying a space of not less than two acres, that, with a strength that had defied time, with a beauty that had at last turned away the wrath of man " (I think nobody could say that quite so well), "still rose if not in perfect, yet admirable, form and state, one of the noblest achievements of Christian art—the Abbey church. The summer vault was now its only roof, and all that remained of its gorgeous windows was the vastness of their arched symmetry, and some wreathed relics of their fantastic frame-work, but the rest was uninjured. From the west window, looking over the transept chapel of the Virgin, still adorned with pillars of marble and alabaster, the eye wandered down the nave to the great orient light, a length of nearly three hundred feet, through a gorgeous avenue of unshaken walls and columns that clustered to the skies. On each side of the Lady Chapel rose a tower. One which was of great antiquity, being of that style which is commonly called Norman, short and very thick



and square, did not mount much above the height of the western front ; but the other tower was of a character very different. It was tall and light, and of a Gothic style most pure and graceful ; the stone of which it was built, of a bright and even sparkling colour, and looking as if it were hewn but yesterday. At first, its turreted crest seemed injured ; but the truth is, it was unfinished ; the workmen were busied on this very tower the day that old Baldwin Greymount came as the king's commissioner to inquire into the conduct of this religious house. The Abbots loved to memorise their reigns by some public work, which should add to the beauty of their buildings or the convenience of their subjects : and the last of the ecclesiastical lords of Marney, a man of fine taste and a skilful architect, was raising this new belfry for his brethren when the stern decree arrived that the bells should no more sound. And the hymn was no more to be chaunted in the Lady Chapel ; and the candles were no more to be lit on the high altar ; and the gate of the poor was to be closed for ever ; and the wanderer was no more to find a home.

“The body of the church was in many parts overgrown with brambles and in all covered with a rank vegetation. It had been a very sultry day, and the blaze of the meridian heat still inflamed the air ; the kine, for shelter rather than for sustenance, had wandered through some broken arches, and were lying in the shadow of the nave.



This desecration of a spot, once sacred, still beautiful and solemn, jarred on the feelings of Egremont. He sighed and, turning away, followed a path that after a few paces led him into the cloister garden."

It is here, on more than neutral ground, that, meetly enough, Egremont the young legislator encounters Sybil and her father, Catholics and Chartists. Caste ceases upon consecrated ground. That is the lesson underlying a chapter saying otherwise many a true thing that in 1845 was also a new thing about the monks. "Their history has been written by their enemies," is a sentence not without an application to Disraeli's own. When Egremont, speaking by rote, refers to the fat abbacies which fell to the share of younger sons, he is told by Gerard, "Well, if we must have an aristocracy, I would sooner that its younger branches should be monks and nuns than Colonels without regiments or housekeepers of Royal palaces that exist only in name." As for other palaces, "Try to imagine," says Gerard, "the effect of thirty or forty Chatsworths in this county, the proprietors of which were never absent. You complain enough now of absentees. The monks were never non-resident. They expended their revenue among those whose labour had produced it. These holy men built and planted for posterity; their churches were cathedrals; their schools colleges; their woods and waters, their farms and gardens were

laid out on a scale and in a spirit that are now extinct ; they made the country beautiful, and the people proud of their country. The monasteries were taken by storm. Never was such a plunder. It was worse than the Norman Conquest ; nor has England ever lost this character of ravage. I don't know whether the Union Workhouses will remove it. After an experiment of three centuries, your gaols being full, and your treadmills losing something of their virtue, you have given us a substitute for the monasteries." It is the doctrine that Cobbett also was proclaiming—an adventure to deaf ears. And another of Sybil's associates spoke : "As for community, with the monasteries expired the only type that we ever had in England of such an intercourse. There is no community in England : there is aggregation, but aggregation under circumstances that make it rather a dissociating than a uniting principle."

The intelligent sympathy which Disraeli, here again a pioneer, brought to bear on the Old Religion, and even on some of its modern professors, is illustrated in other books besides *Sybil*. May Dacre, the heroine of *The Young Duke*, is one such ; Contarini Fleming, Disraeli's *alter ego* in so much, becomes a convert in youth, and Nigel Penruddock in *Endymion* in maturer age ; Eustace de Lyle, a pre-Newmanic convert to the Roman Catholic religion while he was still an Eton boy in real life Ambrose

de Lisle, of Garendon, is given as the best type of squire ; and Mr. Trafford is shown as a model manufacturer who housed his people, provided them with recreation-grounds and baths, cared and spent for their health and their goodness, feeling "that between them should be other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages." *Lothair*, with its less grave representatives of the Old Religion, depicts that Society Catholicism, the existence of which only ignorance will deny, and over which Cardinal Manning wept while Disraeli, with a rather like intent, laughed. "The human spirit reigns over Christian Society. If this were not so, London could never be as it is at this day. And how to deal with it? Certainly not with the pieties of our Upper Ten Thousand nor with the devotion of the Faubourg St. Germain." These words of the Cardinal's might stand on the title-page of *Lothair*. All the same they were written by a Churchman who desired that the Church should unify the nation and the nations. The Holy Ghost was to him the Dove bearing a social olive branch—its only bearer ; and it is worth a passing note that, of the persons already named as putting into practice Disraelian ideas, the Dowager Duchess of Newcastle, Sir Philip Rose, and the Marquis of Bute, no less than Manning himself, became enthusiastic adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, which is, as some one in *Sybil* says, "to be respected as the



only Hebrew-Christian Church extant—all other Churches established by the Hebrew Apostles have disappeared, but Rome remains.”

And one hears in the Sibylline pages not only the voice that was to be Manning's, but at times that also which was to be Ruskin's. “The least picturesque of all creations,” a railway station, is pitted, in shame, against a monastery. And of Mowbray, the seat of the Fitz Warenes (descended ignobly, like so many of the Peers in Disraeli's Gallery—Fitz Warene himself from a St. James's Street waiter): “Oh, it is very grand, but, like all places in the manufacturing districts, very disagreeable. You never have a clear sky. Your toilette-table is covered with blacks; the deer in the park seem as if they had bathed in a lake of Indian ink; and as for the sheep, you expect to see chimney-sweeps for the shepherds not duchesses as in a Watteau.” The æsthetic, the political, the religious movements, were under different captains, were even unaware of their nearness to each other, but all, seen at dispassionate distance, converged one way.

The scene at the Temple, the cheap restaurant in a manufacturing town to which fatherless and unchristened Devilsdust takes his two mill ladies, Miss Caroline and Miss Harriet, is familiar. Some of the old salt has gone from the narrative now, the town “pleasures” of the people surprise no longer; the



costermonger has his theatre and his club like any lord, the same theatre—why not?—and (if he gets enough money) the same club. But there is other grime than that on the lady's toilette-table ; a darkness of the pit, that Disraeli set out to disperse. The colliery village occupies his pen at the beginning of the Third Book of *Sybil* :

“ It was the twilight hour ; the hour at which in southern climes the peasant kneels before the sunset image of the blessed Hebrew maiden ; when caravans halt in their long course over vast deserts, and the turbaned traveller, bending in the sand, pays his homage to the sacred stone and the sacred city ; the hour, not less holy, that announces the cessation of English toil, and sends forth the miner and the collier to breathe the air of earth, and gaze on the light of heaven. They come forth : the mine delivers its gang and the pit its bondsmen ; the forge is silent and the engine is still. The plain is covered with the swarming multitude : bands of stalwart men, broad-chested and muscular, wet with toil, and black as the children of the tropics ; troops of youth—alas ! of both sexes, though neither their raiment nor their language indicates the difference ; all are clad in male attire ; and oaths that men might shudder at, issue from lips born to breathe words of sweetness. Yet these are to be—some are—the mothers of England. But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language

when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a-day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy : circumstances that seem to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little Trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ. See too these emerge from the bowels of the earth. Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid ; entrusted with the fulfilment of most responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it. Their labour indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and in solitude. They endure that punishment which philosophical philanthropy has invented for the direst criminals, and which those criminals deem more terrible than the death for which it is substituted. Hour after hour elapses, and all that reminds the infant Trappers of the world they have quitted and that which they have joined, is the passage of the coal-waggons for which they open the air-doors of the galleries, and on keeping which doors constantly closed, except

at this moment of passage, the safety of the mine and the lives of the persons employed in it entirely depend. Sir Joshua, a man of genius and a courtly artist, struck by the seraphic countenance of Lady Alice Gordon, when a child of very tender years, painted the celestial visage in various attitudes on the same canvas, and styled the group of heavenly faces—guardian angels.”

Country cottages have been described ; the dwellers of the towns were not less basely housed. Wodgate has the appearance of “a vast squalid suburb.” “It is rare to meet with a young person who knows his own age, rarer to find the boy who has seen a book or the girl who has seen a flower.” Asked the name of their religion, the people reply by a stare and a laugh ; and they live in “long lines of little dingy tenements, with infants lying about the road.” That civic life, which Disraeli the novelist now mourned over in absence, and which Disraeli the politician was to do so much to foster, was not yet brought to birth :

“There were no public buildings of any sort ; no churches, chapels, town-hall, institute, theatre ; and the principal streets in the heart of the town in which were situate the coarse and grimy shops, though formed by houses of a greater elevation than the preceding, were equally narrow and if possible more dirty. At every fourth or fifth



house, alleys seldom above a yard wide, and streaming with filth, opened out of the street. These were crowded with dwellings of various size, while from the principal court often branched out a number of smaller alleys or rather narrow passages, than which nothing can be conceived more close and squalid and obscure. Here, during the days of business, the sound of the hammer and file never ceased, amid gutters of abomination and piles of foulness and stagnant pools of filth ; reservoirs of leprosy and plague, whose exhalations were sufficient to taint the atmosphere of the whole kingdom and fill the country with fever and pestilence. A lank and haggard youth, ricketty and smoke-dried, and black with his craft, was sitting on the threshold of a miserable hovel and working at the file. Before him stood a stunted and meagre girl, with a back like a grasshopper ; a deformity occasioned by the displacement of the bladebone, and prevalent among the girls of Wodgate from the cramping posture of their usual toil."

The story of the Truck system is told—the payment of wages in fourth-rate food, under conditions of fatigue, and at the hands of bestial bullies. To an onlooker like Disraeli, with the Sanitary laws of Moses in his brain, the savagery of the Islanders must have seemed complete ; an onlooker, impartial, to some extent impassive, even here. The alien in him turned an impartial eye on rich and





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THE MONUMENT IN PARLIAMENT SQUARE.

Designed by M. Raggi.

*[To face p. 434.]*



poor alike ; and the advantage of the attitude explains to us why all great artists have to be aliens in one way or another. It was not worth Disraeli's while to be a partisan ; he presents to us debauched Simon Halton as well as selfish Lord Marney ; shows the same jealousies among the National Delegates as those that eat out the hearts of Cabinet Ministers. Chartists conspire in the inn parlour while an aristocratic cabal meets in a St. James's Square drawing-room to wrest by safe and calculated intrigue from ministers the promotion which was the price of their support. The book begins, proceeds, and closes without an illusion ; and is yet a book big with purpose. Above all, in *Sybil*, does Disraeli make war upon the claims of aristocrats to rule by right of their station. Almost to a man, they are fools or knaves ; nothing is left them in their nakedness when even their pedigrees crumble beneath his inquisition, the fig leaves fall from the family-tree. It was, perhaps, a final sop to the libraries to let Sybil, the daughter of the people, end as a baroness in her own right : the ancient authors of the Book of Job made a similar concession—Job gets his prosperity again. Again, the incidents of the attack of Mowbray Castle by the mob are not perhaps overdrawn in themselves ; but as a means to an end, that end being the recovery of papers that will prove Sybil's nobility of birth, they tend to the extravagant. The killing of Lord Marney so that

Egremont may succeed him, and the killing of Gerard to rid Egremont, marrying Gerard's daughter Sybil, of a difficult father-in-law—these are felt to be flaws in the novelist's work of art ; death is too easy a solution of his difficulties to be one worthy of his closing with it. Indeed the book ends abruptly ; and it ends, from the story point of view, exactly where one wants it to go on. A picture of Sybil (one hopes Egremont persuaded her to spell her name Sibyl) as mistress of Marney and lover of the poor would not have been beyond Disraeli's powers, with his intimate understanding of cottage and hall. Elsewhere in literature, though not in life, we look in vain for a modern Lady of Burleigh who, milkmaid reared, does not "droop" under "the burden of an honour" acquired by marriage. Disraeli had instincts more humane ; he did not look at life—at the Hall—from the confines of a village rectory or the enclosure of a petty squire's walls.

The question remains—was all the emotion of this book, the most Radical that even Disraeli ever wrote, to evaporate in the Senate, or was he to put upon the Statute Book, or to help others to put there, that charter of liberty which grew under his pen at Grosvenor Gate ? He, indeed, expected us, when we set down his book, to put him to the test. In a final passage, he alludes to his own Parliamentary position ; a passage which those who have here followed his



earliest speeches will best understand. Thirteen years have gone; but the hustings sentiments of 1832 are reproduced and expanded in the novel of 1845 :

“And thus I conclude the last page of a work, which though its form be light and unpretending, would yet aspire to suggest to its readers some considerations of a very opposite character. A year ago, I presumed to offer to the public some volumes that aimed to call their attention to the state of our political parties; their origin, their history, their present position. In an age of political infidelity, of mean passions and petty thoughts, I would have impressed upon the rising race not to despair, but to seek in a right understanding of the history of their country and in the energies of heroic youth—the elements of national welfare. The present work advances another step in the same emprise. From the state of Parties it now would draw public thought to the state of the People whom those parties for two centuries have governed. The comprehension and the cure of this greater theme depend upon the same agencies as the first: it is the past alone that can explain the present, and it is youth that alone can mould the remedial future. The written history of our country for the last ten reigns has been a mere phantasma; giving to the origin and consequence of public transactions a character and colour in every respect dissimilar with their natural form and hue.

In this mighty mystery all thoughts and things have assumed an aspect and title contrary to their real quality and style: Oligarchy has been called Liberty; an exclusive Priesthood has been christened a National Church; Sovereignty has been the title of something that has had no dominion, while absolute power has been wielded by those who profess themselves the servants of the People. In the selfish strife of factions two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England—the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the people have disappeared; till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has degenerated again into a serf. It is nearly fourteen years ago, in the popular frenzy of a mean and selfish revolution which neither emancipated the Crown nor the People, that I first took the occasion to intimate and then to develop to the first assembly of my countrymen that I ever had the honour to address, these convictions. They have been misunderstood, as is ever for a season the fate of Truth, and they have obtained for their promulgator much misrepresentation, as must ever be the lot of those who will not follow the beaten track of a fallacious custom. But Time, that brings all things, has brought also to the mind of England some suspicion that the idols they have so long worshipped and the oracles that have so long deluded them are not the true ones. There is a whisper rising in this

country that Loyalty is not a phrase, Faith not a delusion, and Popular Liberty something more diffusive and substantial than the profane exercise of the sacred rights of sovereignty by political classes. That we may live to see England once more possess a free Monarchy and a privileged and prosperous People, is my prayer ; that these great consequences can only be brought about by the energy and devotion of our Youth is my persuasion. We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can be no longer synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions ; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity."

*Sybil ; or, The Two Nations*, was published by Colburn in 1845 ; has gone through many editions in England and America ; was translated into French in 1870 ; and bears the well-known dedication :

"I would inscribe these volumes to one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathise with the suffering ; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided, their pages ; the most severe of critics, but—a perfect Wife !"



**"One of my Oldest Friends"**

Sir George Sinclair was Edinburgh-born in 1790, and at Harrow was intimate with Byron—an associa-



tion which is presumably relied upon by his son, Sir Tollemache Sinclair, in proposing [1903] to place tablets to Byron's memory at Hucknall Torkard, though the poet's own descendants are perfectly able, and perfectly qualified, to be the guardians of his tomb. After leaving Harrow, Sir George went as a student to Göttingen. He was elected M.P. for Caithness before he attained his majority, and he sat for about thirty years, the last three or four of which were those of Disraeli's first membership. He married, in 1816, Camilla, daughter of Sir William Manners; in 1851 he joined the Free Church of Scotland; and he died in 1868, having, a year earlier, dissociated himself from the Tory party in consequence of their Reform Bill—"the Conservative surrender" to democracy, as the *Quarterly Review* called it, for once in alliance with the Whig *Edinburgh Review*.



**"A Good Cause and a Great Occasion"**

*To Sir George Sinclair, Bart.*

"GROSVENOR GATE,

"March 13th, 1846.

"MY DEAR SIR GEORGE,—I have delayed answering your very welcome letter, in the hope that I might find a quiet half-hour to communicate with one for whom I have so much regard and respect as yourself. But that seems impossible, and I cannot allow another day to pass without expressing



how much touched I was by hearing from you, and how much I sympathise with those sorrows which have prevented us all of late enjoying your society.

“Here we are involved in a struggle of ceaseless excitement and energy. Deserted by our leaders, even by the subalterns of the camp, we have been obliged to organise ourselves and to choose chieftains from the rank and file: but the inspiration of a good cause and a great occasion has in some degree compensated for our deficiencies, and we work with enthusiasm. Would you were among us to aid and counsel, and that great spirit too, departed from this world as well as the senate, on whose memory I often dwell with respect and fondness.

“I thank you for your hints, of which I shall avail myself, and shall always be proud and happy to cherish your friendship.

“Yours, dear Sir George, very sincerely,

“B. DISRAELI.”



“*The Noble Roman Spirit*”

*To Sir George Sinclair, Bart.*

“GROSVENOR GATE,

“November 25th, 1847.

“MY DEAR SIR GEORGE,—I do not pretend to be a correspondent, as I have often told you. I am overworked, otherwise I should be glad to communicate with you, of all men, in the spirit, and

bathe the memory sometimes in those delicious passages of ancient song which your unrivalled scholarship so beautifully commands. My dear friend John Manners writes to me every week, now he is shut out from Parliament, and expects no return, but he gives me his impressions and counsels, often the clearer from his absence from our turbulent and excited scene. I cannot venture to ask such favours from you, though I should know how to appreciate the suggestive wisdom of a classic sage.

“On Tuesday will commence one of the most important debates that ever took place in the House of Commons. I shall reserve myself, I apprehend, to the end. It will last several nights. There is a passage about usury, which haunts my memory, and which I fancied was in Juvenal, but I could not light upon it as I threw my eye over the pages yesterday. Notwithstanding our utilitarian senate, I wish that, if possible, the noble Roman spirit should sometimes be felt in the House of Commons, expressed in its own magnificent tongue. I have of late years ventured sometimes on this, not without success, and in one instance I remember a passage which I owed to your correspondence. It was apposite, when in reference to Sir James Graham’s avowed oblivion of the past I told him—

“*Ut dî neminerunt, meminit fides.*

“Let me at least hear that you are better, and

always believe me, with the most unaffected regard,  
your friend and servant,

“B. DISRAELI.”

Once, when Mrs. Disraeli accompanied her husband to a photographer who had asked a sitting from him and who gave him a pedestal to rest upon, she leapt from her ambush, and pushed away the pedestal, exclaiming : “Dizzy has never had any one but me to lean upon in life, and he shall not be shown with a prop now.” In this letter to Sir George Sinclair we have a glimpse of the caged politician putting out his trunk, as the elephant might at the Zoo, for a cracker. The sincerity of the allusion to Lord John Manners’s letters will be accepted by those whose experience of Lord John as a correspondent has enabled them to appreciate his sane outlook and his very direct powers of expression.

Later Sir George Sinclair refused his name to the Edinburgh committee of welcome to his old correspondent, whom, as these early letters show, he had primed with quotations to baffle and demolish his opponents. With the letters of twenty years earlier before us, we read with double interest Disraeli’s allusions to the absentee in 1867 :

“Pardon,” he said, “some feeling on my part when I remember that it is in consequence of my conduct, in consequence of our unprincipled

withdrawal of securities, and the betrayal of our supporters, who insisted on being betrayed, that I miss to-day the presence of one of my oldest and most valued friends. I should have liked to be welcomed by his cordial heart and with the ripe scholarship which no one appreciated more than myself. He has communicated the withdrawal of his confidence in a letter which, strange to say, has not a quotation. No one could have furnished a happier one. I can picture him to myself at this moment in the castellated shades of Thurso with the *Edinburgh Review* on one side, and on the other 'the Conservative surrender.' . . . I see many gentlemen who have doubtless been as magistrates, like myself, inspectors of peculiar asylums. You meet there some cases which I have always thought at the same time the most absurd and the most distressing. It is when the inmate believes that all the world is mad and that he himself is sane. But, to pass from these gloomy images, really these *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviewers* no one more admires than myself. But I admire them as I do first-rate post-houses which, in old days, to use a Manchester phrase, 'carried on a roaring trade.' Then there comes some revolution of progress. Things are altered. Boots of the Blue Bell and the chambermaid of the Red Lion embrace, and they are quite in accord in this—in denouncing the infamy of railroads."



*The '48 in Paris*

*To Sir George Sinclair, Bart.*

*[Just after the expulsion of Louis Philippe from Paris.]*

"MY DEAR SIR GEORGE,—Thanks, many, for your excellent hints of this morning. Every day for these two months I have been wishing to find a moment of repose to write to you—but I have been entirely engrossed with affairs, public and private—and now after all, I write to you in the midst of a revolution. The catastrophe of Paris is so vast, so sudden, so inexplicable, so astounding, that I have not yet recovered from the intelligence of yesterday afternoon. It must have an effect on this country, and on all Europe prepared to explode. Here the tone of men is changed in an instant, and our friend Joseph Hume made a speech last night under the inspiration of the Jacobinical triumph—quite himself again!

"As for votes of non-confidence, had one been proposed when you suggested it, I calculated that the Government might have had two hundred majority: all the Peelites and time-servers being then prepared to support them. Affairs are now somewhat changed, and it is on the cards that a few days may produce some result. I am heartily glad I denounced the Jacobin movement of Manchester<sup>1</sup> before this last French revolution. I am obliged

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to a speech made by Bright at Manchester containing the words: "Manchester ought to unfurl the banner of Liberty Fraternity, and Equality."

and gratified by all your letters, and enclose some documents as you wished.

“Yours ever,

“D.”



***Government “Ghosts”***

“GROSVENOR GATE,

“*Half-past one.*”

“MY DEAR WOOD,—My not seeing you this morning has terribly deranged my plans, as there is a Cabinet at two o’clock.

“I send this by messenger to beg that you will come on immediately to D.S. [Downing Street], and I will come out of the Cabinet to see you, as there is a point, among many others, on which I wish to speak with you, without a moment’s loss of time.

“Yours sincerely,

“D.”

The letter is undated ; and the Cabinet and the Wood that was to fill its crevices at a moment’s notice are now difficult to identify. None the less, like the letters to Sir George Sinclair, it illustrates the bustle, the sudden search for detail, the dry diligence, that frequently became the portion of a working debater, and still more of an imperturbable Chancellor of the Exchequer. Downing Street is haunted—in every

cupboard is the skeleton of a speech, and behind each chair a "ghost."

Disraeli could look back on the old "coaching" days in two senses: the days when the early Railway Bills demanded on the part of the legislator a knowledge only to be had from experts by word of mouth—the treatises had not had time to be written. Mr. George Somes Layard tells the story of "A Scrap of Paper," not without its own touch of drama—a story in which quite another Wood appears. In 1847, during the debate on the Suspension of Public Works (Ireland) Bill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Charles Wood (afterwards Lord Halifax), quoted some figures, on the faith of an anonymous informant, showing that only a quarter of the money spent on constructing a line went into the pockets of the labourers. "And what has the honourable member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli) dared to do? He has actually risen in his place and said that he has seen or communicated with the gentleman from whom these figures were received, and had heard from him that he (Sir Charles Wood) had entirely misconceived them. What will the House think of this statement of the honourable member in view of the following message from my anonymous informant: 'I certainly never called upon Mr. Disraeli or communicated with him in my life'?"

When the member for Shrewsbury arose, he was



narrowly watched by the Commons, who plainly appeared to think that something Machiavellian was in course of unravelment. Mr. Disraeli corrected the Chancellor. He had *not* stated that he had been in communication with the anonymous informant from whom the figures had been obtained by the Minister, but that he had been in communication with a gentleman of great experience and peculiar knowledge on scientific subjects who supposed, from the speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he had been the person it contained allusions to, since he had been in correspondence with the Government. "All this confusion," Mr. Disraeli went on to say, "arises from using anonymous communications in this House. But when we know the number of persons who communicate directly or indirectly with the Government, not, perhaps, with persons in as exalted a position as the right honourable gentleman, but with persons in a very high position, I can readily understand twenty or thirty or even fifty of these anonymous individuals going about London and believing that they are the authorities whose statements the Minister has repeated to the assembled Parliament." Mr. Disraeli then offered to give his informant's name if the House required it; but, inasmuch as he was a professional gentleman, and the circumstances might place him in an invidious position, he thought that perhaps the House would not demand it, especially as the statement had not been made to him alone,



but in the presence of his noble friend the member for Lynn (Lord George Bentinck). And then, after alluding again to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's "lecture, which I don't think was needed," Mr. Disraeli sat down.

Nearly half a century later Mr. George Somes Layard, looking over some papers that came to him after the death of an uncle, found "a scrap of thin bluish-grey paper, gilt edged and brown stained with age." It was in "the delicate handwriting" of Lord George Bentinck, and it ran :

"HARCOURT HOUSE,  
"February 16th [1847].

"MY DEAR SIR,—I particularly want to see you here at four o'clock exactly about Mr. Disraeli's statement regarding the Chancellor of the Exchequer's anonymous informant. Mr. Disraeli will be here.

"I am, very faithfully yours,

"G. BENTINCK."

The name of the professional informant was thus at last divulged. "My uncle, to whom it was written," says Mr. G. S. Layard, "had had large experience of railway construction under Isambard Kingdon Brunel, chief engineer to the Great Western Railway."

***A Leader's Congratulations***

*To Montagu Scott.*

"GROSVENOR GATE,  
"February 17th, 1864.

"DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your telegram,  
and I congratulate you on your triumph.

"Yours very faithfully,  
"B. DISRAELI."

When Disraeli was returned in 1841 for Shrewsbury as a Tory, he at once sent the news of his victory to Sir Robert Peel. The Minister would feel inspired with great courage, he said, to hear that the electors of Shrewsbury had "done their duty." Perhaps this memory of his early life softened him in after-years when, as Prime Minister or Opposition leader, he himself was the recipient of innumerable such notes. Even so bare a formulary as that now given becomes a bore when it has to be done to order by the dozen ; but Disraeli, although he hated letter-writing, industriously did this duty with his own right hand, and Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, in this order of correspondence, have maintained the tradition they inherited.

Good news later  
Feb 17 - 1864

Dear Sir

I thank you for  
your telegram, & I  
congratulate you on your  
triumph

Yours very faithfully,

Disraeli

Montagu Scott Esq

*Proof-Reading for "Hansard"**To the Editor of the "Debates."*

GROSVENOR GATE,  
 "April 19th, 1862.

"Mr. Disraeli has received from Mr. Hansard a proof of Debate of March 18th, on Science, Art, etc., but he has not received any proof of his speech in the preceding debate on Mr. Horsfall's motion on Belligerent rights.

"Why is this ?

"This is important and must be immediately attended to."

Disraeli, whose columns in *Hansard* are beyond counting, was to the end anxious for accuracy in its reports. Perhaps he counted on remedying the defects in some newspaper versions of his utterances. After making "a good speech in a difficult position on a difficult subject," but delivered so far out of range as at obscure Aylesbury, in 1851, he complained : "I saw to-day in the *Times* two columns of incoherent and contradictory nonsense which made me blush, though I ought to be hardened by this time." On another occasion he said he did not mind what was left out of his speeches, but resented what was put into them. *Hansard* itself he mentioned by name in the House in 1845 : "Why, *Hansard*, instead of being the Delphi of Downing Street, is but the Dunciad of politics."



For reasons not difficult to divine, speeches in Parliament occupy less space in the press than they did thirty or forty years ago ; with the departure of Disraeli public interest in debate suffered a further decline. The day and the month of this letter-date were those of that departure—April 19th.



**A Man of Devon**

*To Sir Lawrence Palk, Bart., M.P.*

"GROSVENOR GATE,  
"Sunday, May 14th, 1865.

"*Mon Très Cher*,—I have seen Lord Stanhope twice, and should like much to see you.

"Could you call on me to-day at three o'clock, or to-morrow at twelve?"

"Yours ever,  
"D."

Disraeli several times stayed with the Palks in the neighbourhood of Exeter, the city of which he had occasion to write in the *Memoir* of his father :

"It so happened that about the year 1795, when he was in his twenty-ninth year, there came over my father that mysterious illness" (he was twenty-four when he himself suffered from it) "to which the youth of men of sensibility, and especially literary men, is frequently subject—a failing of nervous energy, occasioned by study and too sedentary habits, early and habitual reverie, restless

and indefinite purpose. The symptoms, physical and moral, are most distressing : lassitude and despondency. And it usually happens, as in the present instance, that the cause of suffering is not recognised ; and that medical men, misled by the superficial symptoms, and not seeking to acquaint themselves with the psychology of their patients, arrive at erroneous, often fatal, conclusions. In this case the most eminent of the faculty gave it as their opinion that the disease was consumption. Dr. Turton, if I recollect aright, was the most considered physician of the day. An immediate visit to a warmer climate was the specific ; and as the Continent was then disturbed, and foreign residence out of the question, Dr. Turton recommended that his patient should establish himself without delay in Devonshire. When my father communicated this impending change in his life to Wolcot, the modern Skelton shook his head. He did not believe that his friend was in a consumption ; but, being a Devonshire man, and loving very much his native province, he highly approved of the remedy. He gave my father several letters of introduction to persons of consideration at Exeter ; among others, one whom he justly described as a poet and a physician and the best of men, the late Dr. Hugh Downman.

“Provincial cities very often enjoy a transient term of intellectual distinction. An eminent man often collects around him congenial spirits, and the

power of association sometimes produces distant effects which even an individual, however gifted, could scarcely have anticipated. A combination of circumstances had made at this time Exeter a literary metropolis. A number of distinguished men flourished there at the same moment ; some of their names are even now [1848] remembered. Jackson of Exeter still survives as a native composer of original genius. He was also an author of high æsthetical speculation. The heroic poems of Hole are forgotten ; but his essay on *The Arabian Nights* is still a cherished volume of elegant and learned criticism. Hayter was the classic antiquary who first discovered the art of unrolling the MSS. of Herculaneum. There are many others, noisier and more bustling, who are now forgotten, though they in some degree influenced the literary opinion of their time. It was said, and I believe truly, that the two principal, if not sole, organs of periodical criticism at that time, I think the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review*, were principally supported by Exeter contributions. No doubt this circumstance may account for a great deal of mutual praise and sympathetic opinion upon literary subjects, which, by a convenient arrangement, appeared in the pages of publications otherwise professing contrary opinions. Exeter had then even a Learned Society which published its Transactions.

“With such companions, by whom he was



received with a kindness and hospitality which to the last he often dwelt on, it may easily be supposed that the banishment of my father from the delights of literary London was not as productive a source of gloom as the exile of Ovid to the savage Pontus, even if it had not been his happy fortune to be received on terms of intimate friendship by the accomplished family of Mr. Baring, who was then member for Exeter,<sup>1</sup> and beneath whose roof he passed a great portion of the period of nearly three years during which he remained in Devonshire. The illness of my father was relieved but not removed by this change of life. Dr. Downman was his physician, whose only remedies were port wine, horse exercise, rowing on the neighbouring river, and the distraction of agreeable society. This wise physician recognised the temperament of his patient, and perceived that his physical derangement was an effect instead of a cause. My

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli the Younger was to cross less secluded paths with these same Barings. It was the early rumour of Sir Thomas Baring's elevation to the peerage which gave the boy at Bradenham the hope of first entering Parliament for Wycombe; and he is found writing to his sister in April, 1836, a year before he did actually get elsewhere a seat: "The Carlton is a great lounge, and I have found a kind friend in Francis Baring, Lord Ashburton's eldest son." Again, three months later: "We had a most agreeable party at the Ashburtons'—the Baring family are disposed to be very friendly." But when a Baring became, later again, a bishop, the High Churchmen of Durham diocese did not think this particular representative of the Baring family at all "friendly." To them he was, in the intimate talk of their rectories, "Over Baring" "Past Baring," and "Bear-in-a-ring."



father, instead of being in a consumption, was endowed with a frame of almost superhuman strength, which was destined for half a century of continuous labour and sedentary life. The vital principle in him, indeed, was so strong that when he left us at eighty-two it was only as the victim of a violent epidemic."

If, for his father's sake, Disraeli later walked the streets of Exeter and looked on the Exe, seeing all the ducks as swans, another and the only nearer association possible to him was that which existed between the city and his wife. The story that she was an Exeter shop-girl when Wyndham Lewis first beheld her may go its way with the legend that she was a Welsh mill-hand. She had spent her girlhood, however, almost within sight of Haldon, in her father's house at Brampford Speke, and thither she drove with her husband to revisit the modest farmstead in which her mother's fair fortune had enabled her to pass a prosperous childhood, the simplest ever passed by any woman whose "predestined brows" were to wear a coronet in their "own right."

Exeter supplied also a third link in the chain of Disraeli's fate. At the Palks' he met the lady who, by letter, had already made his acquaintance, and who shares with him and with Lady Beaconsfield the "narrow house" at Hughenden—Mrs. Brydges Willyams. Because he, too, met her at the Palks',

the twelfth Duke of Somerset may here be quoted as writing to the Duchess (February, 1858): "There was a party in the evening . . . the most remarkable person was a little dark old woman, smothered up in a black wig, who is said to be near a hundred, and very rich; she is Disraeli's great friend, and the person whom he comes to see at Torquay; as she has no near relations, it is to be hoped she will leave him her money."

In Sir Lawrence Palk, Disraeli found a supporter who kept the pace. In the Reform Movement especially he was no laggard; and when Disraeli's Edinburgh phrase about "educating" the party was the occasion of a good deal of strained banter, Sir Lawrence declared to his constituents that he, for one, had needed no cramming. The ever racy Bernal Osborne (himself of the tribe of Judah and an old friend, though a political opponent, of Disraeli) alluded to the Minister and to Sir Lawrence Palk in a rampant speech delivered to his Nottingham constituents about this time: "Now, it is all very well to talk of Lord Derby being the leader, but the real man who pulls the strings and has reconstructed the party is Mr. Disraeli. (Cheers and groans.) Never groan at a man of such great and brilliant intelligence. Although I am opposed to him, I am proud of him, and so ought you to be, and I will tell you why; because he is a real working

man, who has made himself, without connexions, by nothing but his great abilities ; and, though I differ from their application, I will always give my meed of praise to the intelligence which has made for itself such a splendid position. I do Mr. Disraeli full credit, so much so as to think that though he may occasionally have held the candle to the delusions of the Tory party, he has never credited their dogmas, nor acted upon their principles. I will not go into the morality of the thing, but I believe Mr. Disraeli, in his heart, has always been a Liberal—nay, more—has been a Radical, biding his time. . . . Mr. Disraeli remarked at the Lord Mayor's Banquet that 'a patriotic Parliament' had passed the Reform Bill ; but they passed it, wearied out by details, and as they would any other measure had they had their noses kept to the grindstone night and day, many of them, too, having paid heavily for their seats and not wanting a dissolution. A good deal had been heard about the origin of household suffrage ; there always were numerous claimants for great inventions ; Sir Isaac Newton's were now claimed for a Frenchman, Pascal ; but it did not greatly matter whether it was got from Hume or Bright, or, to go further back, from General Cartwright, who once sat for Nottingham, and who was so Radical a Reformer, he was for abolishing the Trinity and owing nothing to anybody. It had, however, always



been supposed that the wise men came from the East, but the other day—though, perhaps, not many of them read it, for the speaker was not a very distinguished gentleman—the other day there was a still small voice heard in the West—the West of England. At a Conservative dinner this small voice denied that Mr. Disraeli had educated his party. The speaker, for himself and colleague, said, ‘We were not at the great Parliamentary academy of Dotheboys Hall (laughter) ; we never were put there, but we, the members for Devonshire, made the discovery for ourselves.’ Sir Lawrence Palk claimed that he suggested it to the Government and they acted upon it. (A laugh.)” At any rate, Sir Lawrence was Disraeli’s *Mon très cher* at a time when the Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill was coming within measurable distance of practical politics. He had done with constituencies in April, 1880, when he went to the Upper House as Lord Haldon, and he died in 1883.



### *The Woman of the Windfall*

Mrs. Brydges Willyams became a correspondent of Disraeli’s in 1851. A stranger, she was the first to write ; she was the second to write ; also she was the third to write. Many women write to statesmen to express their admiration ; and the mere fact that this



lady added a request for Disraeli's advice on a matter of business did not deter him—an unwilling correspondent always—from putting her note into the fire. In her second note, greatly daring, she proposed a meeting beside the fountain in the Exhibition Building. Writing to her years later, when he had made her acquaintance, he says of the 1862 Exhibition at South Kensington :

“This is not so fascinating a one as that you remember when you made an assignation by the Crystal Fountain which I was ungallant enough not to keep, being far away when it arrived at Grosvenor Gate. The later exhibition,” he adds, “though not so charming as the first, is even more wonderful. That was a woman—this is a man.”

If all men were Disraelis, the allusion to their wonderfulness might well stand.

Wonderful enough a woman was Mrs. Brydges Willyams of Mount Braddon, Torquay, daughter and heiress of Mendez da Costa, a Jew, like the Disraelis, of Spanish line. Miss da Costa's father was a man about town in the early 'thirties in London, and was commonly called the Colonel, in allusion to his having fought with, or followed, the Napoleonic army during the Peninsular War. Her husband, a member of the Cornish family of Willyams, left her a childless widow in 1820. Thirty years elapsed before she wrote to Disraeli, whose public career she probably followed

from the first. The two neglected letters were succeeded by the third, in which she pressed for the meeting by the Crystal Fountain. This time Disraeli kept the tryst—as marvellous as any in his own novels. Hear Mr. Froude, who perhaps, himself a Devonian, took a special interest in the story, and in whose hands it loses nothing in the telling :

“ By the side of the fountain he found sitting an old woman, very small in person, strangely dressed, and peculiar in manner ; such a figure as might be drawn in an illustrated story for a fairy grandmother. She told him a long story of which he could make nothing. Seeing that he was impatient she placed an envelope in his hands, which, she said, contained the statement of a case on which she desired a high legal opinion. She begged him to examine it at his leisure. He thrust the envelope carelessly in his pocket, and, supposing that she was not in her right mind, thought no more about the matter. The coat which he was wearing was laid aside, and weeks passed before he happened to put it on again. When he did put it on, the packet was still where it had been left. He tore it open, and found a bank-note for a thousand pounds as a humble contribution to his election expenses, with the case for the lawyers, which was less absurd than he had expected. This was, of course, submitted to a superior counsel, whose advice was sent at once to Torquay with acknowledgments

and apologies for the delay. I do not know what became of the thousand pounds. It was probably returned. But this was the beginning of an acquaintance which ripened into a close and affectionate friendship. The Disraelis visited Mount Braddon at the close of the London season year after year. The old lady was keen, clever, and devoted. A correspondence began, which grew more and more intimate till at last Disraeli communicated freely to her the best of his thoughts and feelings. Presents were exchanged weekly. Disraeli's writing-table was adorned regularly with roses from Torquay, and his dinners enriched with soles and turbot from the Brixham trawlers. He in turn provided Mrs. Willyams with trout and partridges from Hughenden, and passed on to her the venison and the grouse which his friends sent him from the Highlands. The letters which they exchanged have been happily preserved on both sides. Disraeli wrote himself when he had leisure; when he had none, Mrs. Disraeli wrote instead of him. The curious and delicate idyll was prolonged for twelve years, at the end of which Mrs. Willyams died, bequeathing to him her whole fortune, and expressing a wish, which of course was complied with, that she might be buried at Hughenden, near the spot where Disraeli was himself to lie."

The letters are generally political, and rarely, as this one is, at all personal. Thus in 1861, in an



earlier letter than this, after speaking of the United States as the unexpected "scene of a mighty revolution," he adds: "No one can foresee its results"—a truth which he rather perversely, as times have shown, proceeds to contradict by declaring: "They must, however, tell immensely in favour of an aristocracy." It may be added that Mrs. Willyams at first wished that Disraeli, as her heir, should prefix to his surname her maiden name, Da Costa; but she did not persevere in pressing this proposition as a condition.



**"The Lady of Shalott"**

*Disraeli to Mrs. Brydges Willyams.*

"HUGHENDEN,  
"September 2nd, 1862.

"I am quite myself again; and as I have been drinking your magic beverage for a week, and intend to pursue it, you may fairly claim all the glory of my recovery, as a fairy cures a knight after a tournament or a battle. I have a great weakness for mutton broth, especially with that magical sprinkle which you did not forget. I shall call you in future after an old legend and a modern poem, 'The Lady of Shalott.' I think the water of which it was made would have satisfied even you, for it was taken every day from our stream, which rises among the chalk hills, glitters in the sun over a very pretty cascade, then spreads and sparkles into a little lake in which is a natural island. Since I



wrote to you last we have launched in the lake two most beautiful cygnets, to whom we have given the names of Hero and Leander. They are a source to us of unceasing interest and amusement. They are very handsome and very large, but as yet dove-coloured. I can no longer write to you of Cabinet Councils or Parliamentary struggles. Here I see nothing but trees or books, so you must not despise the news of my swans."



**"An Age of Infinite Romance"**

*To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.*

*"December 9th, 1862.*

"They say the Greeks, resolved to have an English King, in consequence of the refusal of Prince Alfred to be their monarch, intend to elect Lord Stanley. If he accepts the charge, I shall lose a powerful friend and colleague. It is a dazzling adventure for the House of Stanley, but they are not an imaginative race, and I fancy they will prefer Knowsley to the Parthenon, and Lancashire to the Attic plains. It is a privilege to live in this age of rapid and brilliant events. What an error to consider it a utilitarian age! It is one of infinite romance. Thrones tumble down, and crowns are offered like a fairy tale; and the most powerful people in the world, male and female, a few years back were adventurers, exiles, and demireps. *Vive la bagatelle!* Adieu.

"D."

"February 7th, 1863.

"The Greeks really want to make my friend Lord Stanley their king. This beats any novel. I think he ought to take the crown ; but he will not. Had I his youth, I would not hesitate even with the earldom of Derby in the distance."

Oddly enough, Disraeli himself had once, if only for a moment, fancied himself, under favourable conditions, a plausible candidate for the Greek crown. The story, which takes us back more than thirty-three years, was told in an article on "The Early Life of Lord Beaconsfield" in the *Quarterly Review* (January, 1889) : "At the end of November [1830] he reached Athens. The city was still in the possession of the Turks, but was about to be handed over to the Greek Commission appointed to receive it. The Greeks, who were seeking for a king, were so 'utterly astounded' by the magnificence and strangeness of his whimsical costume, and so much impressed by his general appearance, that he 'gathered a regular crowd round his quarters, and had to come forward and bow like Don Miguel and Donna Maria.' 'Had he £25,000 to throw away, he might, he really believed, increase his headaches by wearing a crown.'" As it was, he contented himself on a week's fare of "the wild boar of Pentelicus and the honey of Hymettus." Had Lord Stanley not "preferred Knowsley to the Parthenon," the fortunes of Disraeli's further history



*Photo by Walker & Cockerell.*

LORD BEACONSFIELD, 1879.

The statue by Lord Ronald Gower in the National Portrait Gallery.

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might have been improved by the withdrawal of a colleague who afterwards deserted him at a critical moment, and of whom the Chief later said that he never seemed to show any pleased animation unless he was surrendering a British interest.



***Capitalists as Peacemakers :***

***"Rothschild Hitherto has Won "***

*"October 17th, 1863.*

"The troubles and designs of the French Emperor are aggravated and disturbed by the death of Billault, his only Parliamentary orator and a first-rate one. With, for the first time, a real Opposition to encounter, and formed of the old trained speakers of Louis Philippe's reign, in addition to the young democracy of oratory which the last revolution has itself produced, the inconveniences, perhaps the injuries, of this untimely decease are incalculable. It may even force, by way of distraction, the Emperor into war. Our own Ministry have managed their affairs very badly, according to their friends. The Polish question is a diplomatic Frankenstein, created out of cadaverous remnants by the mystic blundering of Lord Russell. At present the peace of the world has been preserved not by statesmen, but by capitalists. For the last three months it has been a struggle between the secret societies and the Emperor's millionaires. Rothschild hitherto has won, but the death of Billault may be as fatal to

him as the poignard of a Polish patriot, for I believe in that part of the world they are called 'patriots,' though in Naples only 'brigands.' "

This letter was written when Poland had revolted against Russia, weakened by the Crimean war, and when France, after the campaign against Austrian rule in Italy, seemed likely to turn her hand, for distraction from internal troubles, to an anti-Russian adventure. Disraeli, who weighed the words "patriots" and "brigands," falls into the popular confusion between Frankenstein and his creation.



### ***The Supposed Peril for Prussia***

*To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.*

*"November 5th, 1863.*

"The great Imperial sphinx is at this moment speaking. I shall not know the mysterious utterances until to-morrow, and shall judge of his conduct as much by his silence as by his words. The world is very alarmed and very restless. Although England appears to have backed out of this possible war, there are fears that the French ruler has outwitted us, and that by an alliance with Austria and the aid of the Italian armies he may cure the partition of Poland by a partition of Prussia; Austria in that case to regain Silesia, which Frederick the Great won a century ago from Maria Theresa, France to have the Rhine,

and Galicia and Posen to be restored to Poland. If this happens, it will give altogether a new form and colour to European politics. The Queen is much alarmed for the future throne of her daughter ; but as the war will be waged for the relief of Poland, of which England has unwisely approved, and to which in theory she is pledged, we shall really be checkmated and scarcely could find an excuse to interfere even if the nation wished."

The impending expansion and invincibility of Prussia was not then foreseen, even by cool heads that had no fears or prepossessions born of family affections. Sir Henry Layard, for instance, a good specimen of the ambassador on whose wisdom and prescience our national existence hangs, writing three years earlier (1860) of the affairs of disturbed Europe, had calculated on Prussia's taking a place inferior to that of Italy in the scale of nations : "If Garibaldi, who is the weakest and most easily influenced man in the world, can only be kept quiet, and the set of scoundrels who surround him and lead him be sent about their business, Austria at the same time being kept within her boundaries, and not allowed to interfere, there is every reason to believe that in ten years from this time Italy will take her place among the great nations of Europe, and will probably far exceed at least two of them—perhaps even three—

Russia, Austria, and Prussia, in prosperity, material wealth, and strength."



### *The Disraeli Arms*

Mrs. Brydges Willyams corresponded with Disraeli (claiming kinship, as he did, with the Lara family) about quarterings for her coat-of-arms. In her behalf he communicated with "ambassadors and Ministers of State," and even exchanged parleyings with the private cabinet of the Queen of Spain. The following letter contains allusions to his own crest, which showed the tower of Castile and his motto, *Forti nihil difficile*, used by him as early as at his election at Shrewsbury :

*To Mrs. Brydges Willyams.*

*"July 23rd, 1859.*

"The Spanish families never had supporters, crests, or mottoes. The tower of Castile, which I use as a crest, and which was taken from one of the quarters of my shield, was adopted by a Lara in the sixteenth century in Italy, where crests were the custom—at least in the north of Italy—copied from the German heraldry. This also applies to my motto. None of the southern races, I believe, have supporters or crests. This is Teutonic. With regard to the coronet, in old days, especially in the south, all coronets were



the same, and the distinction of classes from the ducal strawberry leaf to the baron's balls is of comparatively modern introduction."



*The "Educator"*

*To the Editor of the "Times."*

"DOWNING STREET,

"March 6th, 1868.

"SIR,—Lord Russell observed last night in the House of Lords that I 'boasted at Edinburgh that whilst during seven years I opposed a reduction of the borough franchise, I had been all that time educating my party with the view of bringing about a much greater reduction of the franchise than that which my opponents had proposed.' As a general rule, I never notice misrepresentations of what I may have said ; but as this charge was made against me in an august assembly, and by a late First Minister of the Crown, I will not refrain from observing that the charge has no foundation. Nothing of the kind was said by me at Edinburgh. I said there that the Tory party, after the failure of their bill of 1859, had been educated for seven years on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, and during that interval had arrived at five conclusions, which, with their authority, I had at various times announced, viz. :

"1. That the measure should be complete.

"2. That the representation of no place should be entirely abrogated.

“ 3. That there must be a real Boundary Commission.

“ 4. That the county representation should be considerably increased.

“ 5. That the borough franchise should be established on the principle of rating.

“ This is what I said at Edinburgh, and it is true.

“ I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“ B. DISRAELI.”

Very rarely did Disraeli address letters, after he entered Parliament, to the public press. He had had his surfeit with the O'Connell controversy ; later, he likes to pay his faithful constituents the compliment of his political confidences ; and, on occasion, there was a Duke of Marlborough, a Grey de Wilton, or a Lord Dartmouth to be addressed in a document seeking a publicity greater than that gained by a letter indited to any one newspaper, and conferring, besides, upon its recipient a personal gratification. The letter which offers an exception to this rule was called forth by the sentence it quotes from Lord Russell ; but the setting of that sentence was itself noteworthy. Earl Russell, a sincere Reformer who had not succeeded in “ educating ” *his* party when Ministers like Lord Palmerston ruled its councils, might well be forgiven a momentary pang at the better fortune attending the leader of a party that had, in general, looked upon the popular suffrage with suspicion and

even aversion. "We know now," said Lord Russell, with some acidity, "that for three years the [Derby-Disraeli] Government has been carried on upon the principle that, having declared against any reduction whatever in the franchise, the Ministers of the Crown meant all the time to make a larger reduction in the franchise than was proposed by the Liberal party. The consequence is a Government which openly professes one thing and means another." The Duke of Marlborough with some warmth challenged the speaker. "If the noble duke wishes to know what I mean," explained Lord Russell, "I must refer him to a speech made by the present Prime Minister at Edinburgh, in which the course taken by the Government was not called a course of deception, it was not called, as Mr. Disraeli once called the Government of Sir Robert Peel, 'an organised hypocrisy,' but it was called 'a process of education.'"

It was, in part, the old story that where a Jack Straw would be hung, a Lord John Straw could head a Government; that "the country party" would confidently leap into the arms of a Derby-Disraeli Cabinet, even if it were "a leap in the dark" where they would assume a defensive and an offensive attitude, in presence of their foes. If "bad form" mostly consists of the manners of people we dislike, "dangerous legislation" often has its danger apprehended because it comes from a distrusted quarter.



***“Parties in our Church—a Beneficent Necessity” :  
With a Note on the Alleged “Topsy Speech”***

*To the Rev. Arthur Baker, Rector of Addington.*

“HUGHENDEN MANOR,  
“Maundy Thursday, 1868.

“REV. SIR,—I have just received your letter, in which, as one of my constituents, you justify your right to ask for some explanation of my alleged assertion that the High Church Ritualists had been long in secret combination and were now in open confederacy with Irish Romanists for the destruction of the union between Church and State.

“I acknowledge your right of making this inquiry ; and if I do not notice in detail the various suggestions in your letter, it is from no want of courtesy, but from the necessity of not needlessly involving myself in literary controversy.

“You are under a misapprehension if you suppose that I intended to cast any slur upon the High Church party ; I have the highest respect for the High Church party. I believe there is no body of men in this country to which we have been more indebted, from the days of Queen Anne to the days of Queen Victoria, for the maintenance of the orthodox faith, the rights of the Crown, and the liberties of the people.

“In saying this I have no wish to intimate that the obligations of the country to the other great party of the Church are not equally significant.



I have never looked upon the existence of parties in our Church as a calamity ; I look upon them as a necessity, as a beneficent necessity. They are the natural and inevitable consequences of the mild and liberal principles of our ecclesiastical polity, and of the varying and opposite elements of the human mind and character. When I spoke, I referred to an extreme faction in the Church, of very modern date, which does not conceal its ambition to destroy the connexion between Church and State, and which I have reason to believe has been in secret communication, and is now in open confederacy, with the Irish Romanists for the purpose.

“The Liberation Society, with its shallow and short-sighted fanaticism, is a mere instrument in the hands of this confederacy, and will probably be the first victim of the spiritual despotism the Liberation Society is now blindly working to establish.

“As I hold that the dissolution of the union between Church and State will cause permanently a greater revolution in this country than foreign conquest, I shall use my utmost energies to defeat these fatal machinations.

“Believe me, reverend sir, your faithful member and servant,

“B. DISRAELI.”

The speech containing the offending phrase was that delivered by Disraeli as First Lord of the Treasury

in the House of Commons in April, 1868, when Mr. Gladstone put his Irish Church Disestablishment resolutions on the table :

“The High Church Ritualists, of whom the right honourable gentleman (Mr. Gladstone) is the representative here to-night, and the Irish followers of the Pope, have long been in secret confederacy, but they are now in open combination. Under the guise of Liberalism, under the pretence of legislating in the spirit of the age, they are about, as they think, to seize upon the supreme authority. They have their hand upon the Realm of England ; but so long as by the favour of her Majesty I stand here I will oppose to the uttermost the attempts they are making. If they are successful, they will do much more than defeat a political opponent—they will seriously endanger even the tenure of the Crown.”

The common bond of a Disestablishment policy threatened or approved alike by Dr. Pusey and by the Catholic hierarchy of Ireland (who ordered public thanksgivings for Mr. Gladstone's Act when it was finally passed) was Disraeli's justification for an association of two sections whose large agreements are yet lost in lesser feuds. Disraeli's pleasure in his first Prime Ministry and in his passage of a Reform Bill ; his sense, too, of the sudden thrust upon him of a “burning question ” which Mr. Gladstone

had only three years earlier described as "lying at a distance I cannot measure" and as "out of all bearing with the politics of the day";—these partly account for Disraeli's heat and for the discrepancy between his predictions and the now generally recognised facts. The speech, too, had its accidental notoriety as being "delivered" (said Mr. Gladstone, who followed) "under the influence of—a heated imagination." The pause after the "of," together with the roar of invited laughter from the Opposition that filled it, were the methods by which this section of the, at times, very common Commons of England notified that they had seen the Prime Minister swallow at intervals during his speech a "pick-me-up" supplied to him by the friendly hand of (I think) Lord George Hamilton. The strain upon a Prime Minister is great always; at this period it was indeed all but overwhelming, and Disraeli, in the hands of doctors for insomnia, was able to make this great effort only by aid of repeated doses of egg-and-brandy. The innuendo of Mr. Gladstone gained the readier laugh from those who noted the rather unusual mannerisms of the Prime Minister. Always a nervous speaker, and one who found relief in a variety of animated gestures and manipulations, Disraeli on this occasion made his handkerchief more than usually prominent as a "property," waving it in the face of the foe—no white flag, but a red ensign of defiance.



The "Maundy Thursday" dating of a letter written on that day was less usual then than now, and it gave rise, as did so many other minor naturalnesses on Disraeli's part, to an outburst of derision (the least honourable and least lovely sentiment known to men) which he who reads past political history in the light of to-day will find impossible of correlation with the dignity and intelligence of grown-up men. There are still to be found instances in which the example of Parliaments has degraded a nation.

The homage paid to Lord Beaconsfield after his death came rather curiously to be cited by an advanced Ritualist as a precedent for the veneration of images. In the *St. Stephen's Parish Magazine* of Devonport for February, 1903, the Rev. H. H. Leeper writes : "It seems strange that in these so-called enlightened days there should be found any to object to the presence of images of Christ and His mother and saints in our churches. The very people who set up statues of statesmen and patriots in our streets and public squares refuse to countenance a like honour being paid to saints in our churches. The statue of a certain deceased gentleman on his death-day may be honoured by huge votive offerings in the shape of flowers placed at its base. Against such worship no voice of protest is raised. Why, then, is it an act of idolatry to honour in like manner a statue of Christ or His mother set up in His church?" Assuredly



the little Jewish boy who played in King's Road never thought to figure in polemical literature as an argument in favour of the setting up of sacred images in Anglican churches.



### *Natural Selection*

*To W. Johnston, M.P.*

"HUGHENDEN MANOR,

"December 8th, 1869.

"DEAR MR. JOHNSTON,—The leader of a party in the Houses of Parliament is never nominated. The selection is always the spontaneous act of the party of the House in which he sits. It was so in the case of Lord Cairns, who yielded, not unwillingly, to the general wish, Lord Salisbury being one of the warmest of his solicitors. It was so in my own case. Lord Derby appointed me to the leadership, but the party chose to follow me, and the rest ensued. The same jealousy of interference with an arrangement in which their own feelings, and even tastes, should pre-eminently be consulted would, no doubt, be felt if the leadership of a House was to be decided by the votes of those who did not sit in it.

"I make no doubt our friends in the House of Lords will in due season find a becoming chief, but our interposition will not aid them. They will be better helped to a decision by events.

"Yours sincerely,

"B. DISRAELI."

Edward, fourteenth Earl of Derby—"the Rupert of Debate" was a name given him in the old days when the then Lord Stanley was a Peelite and his future colleague the dethroner of Peel)—resigned the Premiership in the February of 1868. It was then that the Queen's summons to Disraeli to form a Government was borne to him by his old opponent at High Wycombe, General Grey. The *Times*, noting the advent of Disraeli to supreme power, paid a tribute to "the courage, the readiness, the unfailing temper" of Disraeli, who had "reconstructed" the old Tory party, and thrice brought it into power.



**"Infamous Libels"**

*To Baron Tauchnitz.*

"HUGHENDEN MANOR,  
"September 23rd, 1870.

"What are called Lives of me abound. They are generally infamous libels, which I have invariably treated with utter indifference. Sometimes I ask myself what will Grub Street do after my departure—who will there be to abuse and caricature? . . . I hope you are well. I am very busy, and rarely write letters, but I would not use the hand of another to an old friend."

The books written about Disraeli—other than those written about Disraeli by Disraeli—make a little library

in themselves. There is *The Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.: A Literary and Political Biography*, published by Mr. Thomas Macknight in 1854. Disraeli had issued his *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography*, in a volume of similar size two years earlier. In the Macknight memoir we have a North of Ireland journalist, the most unc cosmopolitan of men, writing of the most cosmopolitan. The book, angry all through, has its shifty foundations in the shiftiness of the hero of the novel of Disraeli's teens, *Vivian Grey*. Disraeli, said Macknight, was his own hero, Machiavelli in little. As well might George Eliot be identified with Hetty Sorrel: both were women, and there is the independent testimony that every woman is at heart a rake. Of course Hetty on the scaffold—the important episode, after all—will be ignored by the ingenious commentator. The equal catastrophe of Vivian Grey's undisciplined ambitions is also left out of reckoning by these clamorous witnesses to the Grey-Disraeli identity. If it had been written in the first person, it could not have been more clear, they thought; indeed, the use of an alias was the very commonplace of guilty adventure. Those who suggest that Disraeli had not brought together two English statesmen by stratagem for his own purposes (he did not even know, when he wrote it, the Duke of Buckingham, his Marquis of Carabas) are told that dates are always juggled; and



the averment that Disraeli was not present when Vivian Grey killed in a duel a former friend, nor when in a German forest he saved a Grand Duke, nor when in a Grand Ducal palace he fell in love with a Princess who fell in love with him, nor when he ended his career in a wood in Bohemia, extorts the answer that any penny attorney can support an alibi. This is no travesty. Disraeli put so much of himself into his books that he is, of course, particularly vulnerable as a whipping-boy for the fools or knaves who form a small minority of his characters. So much of himself did he put there that if one said that he resembled Vivian Grey in that he had desperate ambitions, and was caged by circumstance and felt he must somehow or other break the bar, the assumption should pass. As it stands, it represents a method of slander of which the Young Generation of to-day have before them no parallel, and which, in the domain of politics, was illustrated by Mr. Chamberlain's password into public life: "I do not think that Mr. Disraeli, if he tried, could speak the truth."<sup>1</sup> Many madmen—those actually in asylums—have been chased there by phantom Jesuits; and the deranged brains of Jesuits, I have heard, are similarly troubled with visions of exasperating Freemasons. The rage—no other word suffices—aroused by the very name of

<sup>1</sup> This is not one of the sayings that come under the "What I have said, I have said" formula. For Mr. Chamberlain made a retraction.





*By permission of Lady Marion Weller.*

LORD BEACONSFIELD.

From a carved ivory cameo, presented by Queen Victoria to her Lady of the  
Bedchamber, Jane, Marchioness of Ely.

[To face p. 482.]



Disraeli, by the luck that he readily got readers for his novels, by his important presence in public life, transports one out of the ordinary regions of literary likes and dislikes, political leanings and aversions, into the chamber of the moral rack. Disraeli had no vendetta against the Inquisition that had driven his fathers from "spell-bound Spain"; for he knew that the persecuting spirit, however disguised in England, was not dead. The alien triumphed in the end; and the record of his triumph is pleasant to tell because it is also the exhaustion, for a long space to come, of the fires of political feud, the story of the education not only of a party in the ways of tolerance, but of the whole nation in a saving cosmopolitanism. If Disraeli bore his traducers no grudge, it would be superfluous indeed for true Dizzyites to bear them any.

Years passed over the Macknight biography; then Mr. T. P. O'Connor followed suit; but the rather pompous rhetoric of the North of Ireland journalist gave way to true Celtic liveliness of narrative and that pleasure in cudgelling which becomes positively contagious. As special pleading it is gay stuff—the brief against Disraeli again loaded incriminatingly with quotations from the mouths of his characters, particularly the villains. I have read and re-read it, and lately read it again, which I rather gather the author himself has not done. Once when I complimented

him on the pleasure he gave readers who most disagreed with him, he seemed to brush the book aside, as something of an early indiscretion ; and we may well suppose that an author who has since become a member of Parliament and has carried on successful guerilla warfare against the two great parties by offering alliance first to one and then to the other, must now be able to appreciate the early Disraelian appeal to Radicals and Tories alike to help him with all hands to oust the Whigs. Bitter as the early O'Connor indictment of Disraeli is, the book is indispensable. It contains matter missing from all others ; and has the rare merit of being good reading from beginning to end. The romance closes before its villain's death. All the same, it remains, in a hundred details, more complete than any of its successors.

There is a story that Disraeli read Mr. O'Connor's book, complimented him on it (which would be like him), and said that had he himself written it he could have made it yet more damning. That is one of the innumerable similar stories told to illustrate the callous cynicism of Disraeli ; there is a close version of it in the report given by another Irish member who made a speech attacking the sincerity of the Minister, which the Minister afterwards congratulated him upon, saying that he could have supplied him with new and sharper points.



The bulky book which came years later from Mr. Algernon Foggo revives the Macknight legend, but misses the O'Connor breeziness. Disraeli is written of as an Evangelical street preacher might have written, fifty years ago, of Dr. Pusey. He is the Evil Incarnate ; and if he does a good deed, or says a good thing (Disraeli was always saying good things, anyway), there is the handy hint at the appearance of Lucifer as an Angel of Light. Do Disraeli's friends, those at close quarters with him, proclaim his rectitude—they do but give their man away ; for was it not written that Antichrist should deceive the very elect ?

A book in defence, agreeable enough, bearing the title of *Disraeli, the Author, Orator, and Statesman*, was written by Mr. John Mill, and published in 1863. It was an anti-Macknight manifesto, and it still reads with a swing. From the grave of Lord Beaconsfield a bouquet of biographies at once arose, friendly if not always exhilarating. Indeed, they were ostentatiously friendly, bulky after the manner of memorials, and "illustrated with permanent photographs." "*An Appreciative Life of the Right Hon. the Earl of Beaconsfield, a Statesman of Light and Leading ; with Portraits of his Contemporaries*, Edited by Cornelius Brown, F.R.S.L., Author of several Historical and Biographical Works"—so ran the commemorating tablet of the title-page of one such set of volumes. There were several of them : mostly monuments

of clay-paper ; with embossed backs of green or brown ; also gilt edges. The "villa" population is said to be Tory ; and such books must be a patent of respectability exposed upon the parlour table. Yet take up even such volumes, and though you pass over pages, "impatient as the wind," you are suddenly caught up and "surprised with joy" at some phrase or sentiment of Disraeli's own.

Mr. James Anthony Froude's shorter biography, contributed to "The Queen's Prime Ministers Series," if a book to be read, does not present a very sufficing nor convincing study, nor does it show its author at his high-tide of style. But it is a notable book for all that. It marks a turning-point in the national judgment—the turning-point long before reached by the Queen. Mr. Froude, who had been as the man in the street in his attitude of mistrust for Disraeli, when he came face to face with many a fiction that had passed into currency as fact frankly gave it the go-by ; and if he did not heartily bless, he cursed not at all. To Sir Theodore Martin he confessed that, on nearer view, Disraeli's features changed ; and it was in no cynical sense that he put upon his title-page the motto—

He was a man ; take him for all in all,  
We shall not look upon his like again.

Also of a series, "The Statesmen Series," and also

valuable, is Mr. T. E. Kebbel's volume. Again, in "The Victorian Era Series," we get Mr. Harold Gorst's bright *Earl of Beaconsfield*. It is eagerly political, with the result that the Disraeli of the Library is merged in the Disraeli of the Arena; and that is as though we saw him on a high wall with the ladder suddenly taken away and he left bewildered aloft. The hand of the Fourth Party—the existence of which was one of the symptoms of Disraeli's withdrawal from the Treasury Bench, and something of a compensating one—is felt here and there as directing the younger pen, which is also a candid pen, not written to order. Yet no weak points in the Disraelian armour are here found; and I have heard Mr. Harold Gorst say that, though he followed hound-like on the scent indicated by the foes of Disraeli, he came on no quarry; hardly had he, I suspect, a decent run. He said in effect: I found no fault in the man. I like to add a mention of a little booklet—published in Appleton's "New Handy-Volume Series"—*Beaconsfield*, by George Makepeace Towle. This is remarkable because it was published so long ago—in 1879—that Disraeli may himself have seen it, and yet it was animated by that spirit of tolerance, discrimination, and justice, which other brief American biographies, many of them no longer than magazine articles, have since displayed, in advance and in reproach of England. France, too, has given



us studies which show him well in perspective at the further range.

Also, before the curtain fell on Lord Beaconsfield, Mr. Francis Hitchman's *Public Life of the Earl of Beaconsfield* made its appearance, doing justice and dealing sympathy to the politician, who must have read it with pleasure, and seen in it an auspice that the day of the infamous libels was done.

Happy Mr. Hitchman ! more happy Mr. W. E. Henley, envied as the writer of understanding notices of *Endymion* that fell under Dizzy's eye, and let him see that the Younger Generation heard his call. Mr. Hitchman's book passed through revised editions after Disraeli's death, and it abides as a useful work of historical reference in the midst of the multitude of recollections and personal impressions since published by various more or less friendly hands. Among these is that—the most promising and therefore the most disappointing—by Sir William Fraser, a Dizzyite, not so much by faith as by the persuasion of facts ; an old Eton boy who seemed inclined to measure *Coningsby* by the “the” omitted before “Brocas” (“no Eton boy would do that”) ; a spectator at many Disraelian feasts, but a lean recorder of them ; a story-teller who omits the story's point, where mere reference to *Hansard* would have recalled it to his mind ; a man, in short, who had not learned from Sir Vavasour that a baronet has some inexplicable tendency to become a



bore. Happily, not even "the far-off look" in the Chief's eye when his supporter approached him in the Carlton led him to suspect in himself the possession of that rather patronising and commonplace disposition which his book proclaims aloud to us. It is a medley of missed opportunities. All Dizzyites, however, use as well as abuse the bulky budget of moderately good, rather doubtful, and quite impossible things to be found in *Disraeli and his Day*; and Sir William has therefore his niche near at hand, if not in the inmost shrine.

Of the many other writers of ability on various aspects of Disraeli's career—whose contributions have mostly made a month's magazines interesting—may be gratefully named Mr. Alfred Austin, Mr. Frederick Greenwood, Mr. Saintsbury, Mr. James Sykes, Mr. J. Henry Harris (a storehead of facts about Lady Beaconsfield), Mr. Bryce, Mr. Brewster, Mr. Childers, Mr. Zangwill, Mr. Escott, Mr. Walter Sichel, Mr. Frederic Harrison, and Mr. Frewen Lord. The rough path to any shrine is made all the smoother for the pilgrim of to-day by the pilgrims, however light-heeled, of all the yesterdays. The succeeding writer (in point of time) must give them gratitude on that; nor can he forget that it is the least, not the greatest, who comes last in such a procession.

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In a note written from 19, Curzon Street,

January 20th, 1881, Lord Beaconsfield acknowledges a little present made to him by Baron Tauchnitz at the time of the publication of *Endymion* :

“ The beautiful vase has arrived, and quite safely. It is a most gracious and gratifying gift ; and I accept it in the full spirit of friendship in which it is offered. . . . I no longer dwell in the house in Park Lane where I once had the pleasure of receiving you, but I am very near.”

Sir William Fraser once noticed on the drawing-room table at Grosvenor Gate a complete set of the Tauchnitz edition of Disraeli's works. Presuming on the safety which generally attends any sort of depreciation of a publisher, Sir William said : “ Does not that annoy you ? ” Disraeli (who had satirised nearly every class except the publishers, and who once thought of a partnership with Moxon for himself) replied : “ No ; on the contrary, I am flattered. The Baron sent them to me himself.” Disraeli had the sense to perceive, as somebody has well said, that the Baron was not only the godfather of English literature upon the Continent, but the inventor of a *format*, and the pioneer of international property in books. The German Baron corresponded in English—with apologies. “ Don't be afraid of your English,” Thackeray once reassured him ; “ a letter containing £ is always in a pretty style.”

*Poets and Titles : A Tale of Two Tennysons**To Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate.*

"BOURNEMOUTH,

"December 20th, 1874.

"DEAR MR. TENNYSON,—A Government should recognise intellect. It elevates and sustains the spirit of a nation. But it is an office not easy to fulfil, for if it falls into favouritism and the patronage of mediocrity, instead of raising the national sentiment it might degrade and debase it. Her Majesty, by the advice of her Minister, has testified in the Arctic expedition, and will in other forms, her sympathy with science. But it is desirable that the claims of high letters should be equally acknowledged. This is not so easy a matter, because it is in the nature of things that the test of merit cannot be so precise in literature as in science. Nevertheless, there are some living names, however few, which I would fain believe will reach posterity, and yours is among the foremost. I should be glad, therefore, if agreeable to yourself, to submit your name to the Queen for the distinction of a baronetcy, so that, by an hereditary honour, there may always be a living memorial of the appreciation of your genius by your countrymen. Have the kindness to inform me of your feelings on this subject ; I shall remain here to January 4th, after that it will be best to direct to me at 10, Downing Street, Whitehall.



"I have the honour to remain, dear Mr. Tennyson, faithfully yours,

"B. DISRAELI."

Once Cardinal Lavigerie, the great Central African "White Missionary," spoke to me of a plan of evangelisation which was his, but which Leo XIII., the Universal Father, had furthered for him before all the universe. I, in return, spoke to the Cardinal of the plan as his own ; and never shall I forget the generous gesture with which he declared : "No, no ; no longer mine ; it is not etiquette to speak of suggesting anything to a Pontiff : what he adopts, that he initiates." On this principle, no doubt, Hallam, Lord Tennyson, in the biography of his father, thus schedules this letter : "On December 20th, the Queen, through Mr. Disraeli, offered my father a baronetcy." The initiation, in the ordinary sense of the word, was obviously the Minister's. As Tennyson was still labelled "Liberal," the offer was apart from political purpose ; nor was Disraeli's personal acquaintance with the Laureate more than a nominal one. In some senses, therefore, the offer was more significant than that which had come earlier from Mr. Gladstone ; or even than that which succeeded, in all senses, when later Mr. Gladstone's bait (and the angled-for poet) rose to a barony. Meanwhile, Tennyson, like any other man who is being bid



for, was not averse from a bargain. He therefore, while declining for himself, was willing to say "yes" for somebody else. We are not given the exact terms of the letter, and that is a loss ; but the upshot was that Mr. Gladstone had made the offer before, that it had been declined, but that the promise of it for the son, after his father's death, would be gratefully accepted. With this, apparently, went the hint that Mr. Gladstone was not unwilling to be so far obliging. Disraeli replied that such a course was contrary to all precedent ; and the poet, accepting the assurance, owned that Gladstone did not "pledge himself to anything contrary to precedent, as he expressly stated." Poets, who may be smiled at for condescending to become "Sirs" and "Lords," are difficult. And when Gladstone (not without some sense of the pricking spur of Disraeli's overture) made the offer of a barony, a barony was accepted, not, we were assured, as a compliment to the poet, no, not even to the son (who has since taken his own rank and station in men's minds, for that matter), but as an uplifting for Literature.

We smile ; not at the elevation of a poet, but rather at the hedging and fencing set about the acceptance of it at too self-conscious Aldworth and Faringford. Disraeli believed that titles would perish if they were left to represent only material wealth ; and the offer of a peerage from one who believed in

the House of Lords as a great constitutional engine may be held, I think, in higher regard than the offer from another who took the House of Lords because it was there, thought it a national burden rather than a national asset, and was willing to perpetuate a social caste for the gratification of personal vanities—ignoble indeed. In brief, Disraeli did not confer honours on genius so much as he conferred genius upon honours. Very early in life Disraeli told the story of a visit he paid to Munich, which I choose to retell here because it is instinct with this sense of “the aristocracy of genius,” and of the elevation which a great man confers on his age. Most people (myself among the number) may disagree with Disraeli’s estimate of “Old Lewis” of Bavaria, and of his work in his capital ; but we need not here confound the matter of policy with the matter of taste.

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*From Heath’s “Book of Beauty” (1841), “By B. Disraeli, Esq., M.P.”*

#### MUNICH.

“The destiny of nations appears to have decreed that a society should periodically, though rarely, flourish, characterised by its love of the Fine Arts, and its capacity of ideal creation. These occasional and brilliant ebullitions of human invention elevate

the race of man ;<sup>1</sup> they purify and chasten the taste of succeeding generations ; and posterity accepts them as the standard of what is choice, and the model of what is excellent.

“Classic Greece and Christian Italy stand out in our universal annals as the epochs of the Arts. During the last two centuries, while manners have undergone a rapid transition, while physical civilisation has advanced in an unprecedented degree, and the application of science to social life has diverted the minds of men from other pursuits, the Fine Arts have decayed and vanished.

“I wish to call the attention of my countrymen to another great movement in the creative mind of Europe ; one yet young and little recognised, but not inferior, in my opinion, either to that of Athens or of Florence.

“It was on a cloudless day of the autumn of last year, that I found myself in a city that seemed almost visibly rising beneath my eye. The street in which I stood was of noble dimensions, and lined on each side with palaces or buildings evidently devoted to public purposes. Few were completely finished : the sculptor was working at the statues that adorned their fronts ; the painter was still touching the external frescoes ; and the scaffold of

<sup>1</sup> The opening phrasing of the letter to Tennyson seems an echo of these words, written thirty-five years before. This very common Disraeli continuity of ideas marks the early maturity of his tastes ; while his later acts redeem the pledges implied in his earlier words.



the architect was not in every instance withdrawn. Everywhere was the hum of art and artists. The Byzantine style of many of these buildings was novel to me in its modern adaptation, yet very effective. The delicate detail of ornament contrasted admirably with the broad fronts and noble façades which they adorned. A church with two very lofty towers of white marble, with their fretted cones relieved with cerulean blue, gleamed in the sun ; and near it was a pile not dissimilar to the ducal palace at Venice, but of nobler and more beautiful proportions, with its portal approached by a lofty flight of steps, and guarded by the colossal statues of poets and philosophers—suitably guarded, for it was the National Library.

“As I advanced, I found myself in squares and circuses, in every instance adorned by an obelisk of bronze or the equestrian statue of some royal hero. I observed a theatre with a lofty Corinthian portico, and a pediment brilliantly painted in fresco with designs appropriate to its purpose ; an Ionic museum of sculpture, worthy to enshrine the works of a Phidias or a Praxiteles ; and a palace for the painter, of which I was told the first stone had been rightly laid on the birthday of Raffaele. But what struck me most in this city, more than its galleries, temples, and palaces, its magnificent buildings, splendid paintings, and consummate statues, was the all-pervading presence and all-inspiring influence of living and breathing Art. In every



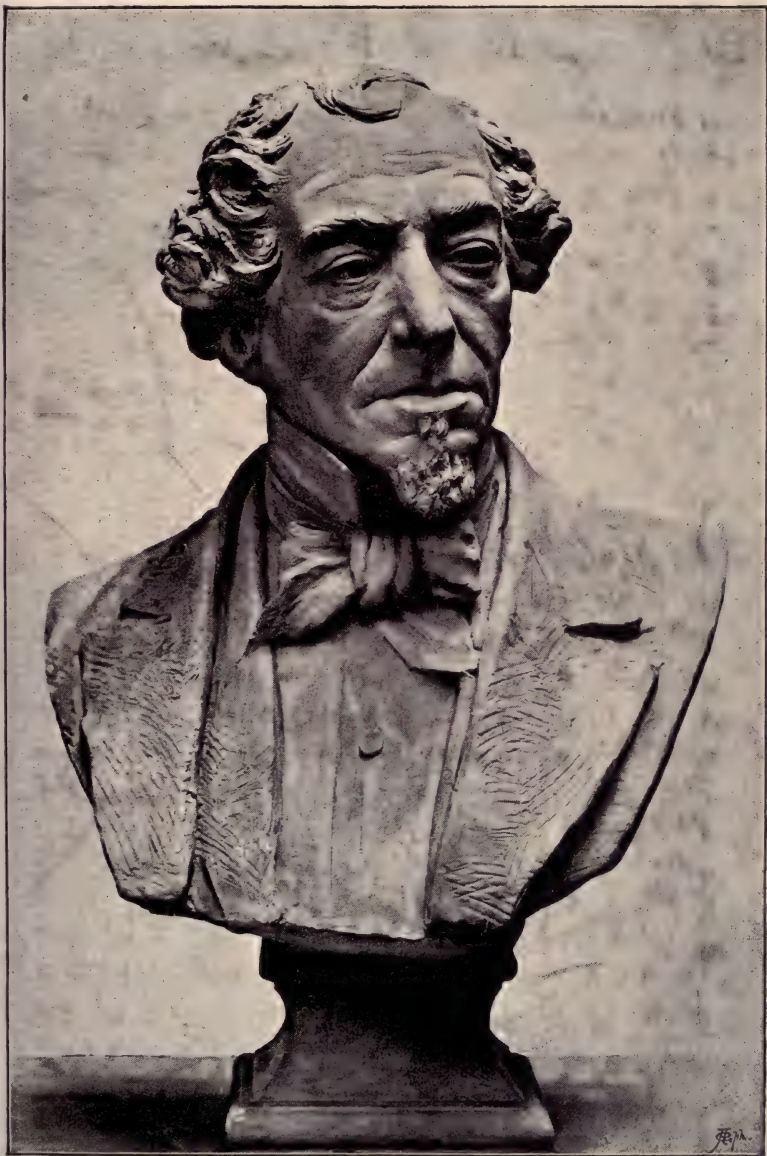
street, a school : the atelier of the sculptor open, the studio of the painter crowded : devoted pupils, aspiring rivals : enthusiasm, emulation, excellence. Here the long-lost feudal art of colouring glass re-discovered ; there fresco-painting entirely revived, and on the grandest scale ; while the ardent researches of another man of genius successfully analyses the encaustic tinting of Herculaneum, and secures the secret process for the triumph of modern Art. I beheld a city such as I had mused over amid the crumbling fanes of Pericles, or, aided alike by memory and fancy, had conjured up in the palaces and gardens of the Medici.

“Such is Munich, a city which, half a century ago, was the gross and corrupt capital of a barbarous and brutal people.<sup>1</sup> Baron Reisbech, who visited Bavaria in 1780, describes the Court of Munich as one not at all more advanced than those of Lisbon and Madrid. A good-natured prince, fond only of show and thinking only of the chase ; an idle, dissolute, and useless nobility ; the nomination to offices depending on women and priests ; the aristocracy devoted to play, and the remainder of the inhabitants immersed in scandalous debauch.

“With these recollections of the past, let us enter the palace of the present sovereign. With

<sup>1</sup> The visitor to Munich to-day deplores, on the contrary, the destruction of the Teutonic city and its transition into sham Classical. The Renaissance had its great Masters ; but not such were the painters and sculptors who contrived in Munich this after-pop of the great sixteenth-century boom.

habits of extreme simplicity, and a personal expenditure rigidly economical, the residence of the King of Bavaria, when completed, will be the most extensive and the most sumptuous palace in the world. But, then, it is not merely the palace of a king : it is a temple dedicated to the genius of a nation. The apartments of state, painted in fresco on the grandest scale, bold in design, splendid in colour, breathe the very Teutonic soul. The subjects are taken from the *Nibelungen Lied*, the Gothic epic, and commemorate all the achievements of the heroic Siegfried, and all the adventures of the beautiful Chrimhilde. The heart of a German beats as he gazes on the forms and scenes of the Teutonic *Iliad* ; as he beholds Hagen the fierce, and Dankwart the swift ; Volker, the minstrel knight, and the beautiful and haughty Brunhilda. But in point of harmonious dimension and august beauty, no chamber is perhaps more imposing than the Kaiser Saal, or Hall of the Sovereigns. It is, I should think, considerably above one hundred feet in length, broad and lofty in exact proportion. Its roof is supported on either side by columns of white marble ; the intercolumniations filled by colossal statues, of gilded brass, of the electors and kings of the country. Seated on his throne, at the end of this imperial chamber, Lewis of Bavaria is surrounded by the solemn majesty of his ancestors. These statues are by Schwanthaler,



LORD BEACONSFIELD.

From the bust by Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A., at Windsor Castle.

[To face p. 498.]





a sculptor who to the severe and classic taste and profound sentiment of his master, Thorwaldsen, unites an exuberance of invention which has filled Munich with the greatest works since Phidias. Cornelius, Julius Schnorr, and Hess are the principal painters who have covered the galleries, churches, and palaces of Munich with admirable frescoes. The celebrated Klenze is known throughout Europe as the first of living architects, and the favourite of his sovereign when that sovereign did not wear a crown ; but we must not forget the name of Gärtner, the architect who has revived the Byzantine style of building with such admirable effect.

“ But it was in the private apartments of the king that I was peculiarly impressed with the supreme genius of Schwanthaler. These chambers, eight in number, are painted in encaustic, with subjects from the Greek poets, of which Schwanthaler supplied the designs. The ante-chambers are devoted to Orpheus and Hesiod, and the ornaments are in the oldest Greek style ; severely simple ; archaic, but not rude ; the figures of the friezes in outline, and without relief. The saloon of reception, on the contrary, is Homeric ; and in its colouring, design, and decoration, as brilliant, as free, and as flowing as the genius of the great Mæonian. The chamber of the throne is entirely adorned with white bas-reliefs, raised on a ground of dead gold ; the subjects Pindaric ; not inferior

in many instances to the Attic remains ; and characterised, at the same time, by a singular combination of vigour and grace. Another saloon is devoted to Æschylus, and the library to Sophocles. The gay, wild muse of Aristophanes laughs and sings in his majesty's dressing-room ; while the king is lulled to slumber by the Sicilian melodies and the soothing landscapes of Theocritus.

“ Of these chambers, I should say that they were a perfect creation of Art. The rooms themselves are beautifully proportioned ; the subjects of their decorations are the most interesting in every respect that could be selected ; and the purity, grace, and invention of the designs are only equalled by their colouring, at the same time the most brilliant and harmonious that can be conceived ; and the rich fancy of the arabesques and other appropriate decorations, which blend with all around, and heighten the effect of the whole. Yet they find no mean rivals in the private chambers of the queen, decorated in an analogous style, but entirely devoted to the poets of her own land. The Minnesingers occupy her first apartments, but the brilliant saloon is worthy of Wieland, whose Oberon forms its frieze ; while the bed-chamber gleams with the beautiful forms and pensive incidents of Goethe's esoteric pen. Schiller has filled the study with his stirring characters and his vigorous incidents. Groups from *Wallenstein* and *Wilhelm Tell* form the rich and unrivalled ceiling : while the fight

of the dragon and the founding of the bell, the innocent Fridolin, the inspired maiden of Orleans, breathe in the compartments of the walls.

“When I beheld these refined creations, and recalled the scenes and sights of beauty that had moved before me in my morning’s wanderings, I asked myself how Munich, recently so Bæotian, had become the capital of modern Art; and why a country of limited resources, in a brief space, and with such facility and completeness, should have achieved those results which had so long and utterly eluded the desires of the richest and most powerful community in the world?

“It is the fashion of the present age to underrate the influence of individual character. For myself, I have ever rejected this consolation of mediocrity. I believe that everything that is great has been accomplished by great men. It is not what I witnessed at Munich, or know of its sovereign, that should make me doubt the truth of my conviction. Munich is the creation of its king, and Lewis of Bavaria is not only a king, but a poet. A poet on a throne has realised his dreams.”

Disraeli’s saying that of Science we may have an exactitude of appreciation not obtainable in the case of the Arts perhaps represents some misgivings about his own taste. If so, that doubt might in later years have got confirmation if he ever re-read this early sketch, charged, as it is, with local and temporary enthusiasm.



*Thomas Carlyle*

Disraeli, generous in offering distinctions, was economical in his phrasing, which the following letter and the Tennyson letter virtually repeat in the first passage ; till, at the end, we get Disraeli's distinction between a " great " poet and a " real " one.

*To Thomas Carlyle.*

(*Confidential.*)

" BOURNEMOUTH,  
" *December 27th, 1874.*

" SIR,—A Government should recognise intellect. It elevates and sustains the tone of a nation. But it is an office which adequately to fulfil requires both courage and discrimination, as there is a chance of falling into favouritism and patronising mediocrity, which, instead of elevating the national feeling, would eventually degrade or debase it. In recommending her Majesty to fit out an Arctic Expedition, and in suggesting other measures of that class, her Government have shown their sympathy with Science ; and they wish that the position of High Letters should be equally acknowledged ; but this is not so easy, because it is in the necessity of things that the test of merit cannot be so precise in literature as in science. When I consider the literary world, I see only two living names which I would fain believe will be remembered, and they stand out in uncontested superiority. One is that of a poet—if not a great poet, a real one ; the other is your own.



"I have advised the Queen to offer to confer a baronetcy on Mr. Tennyson, and the same distinction should be at your command if you liked it ; but I have remembered that, like myself, you are childless, and may not care for hereditary honours. I have, therefore, made up my mind, if agreeable to yourself, to recommend to her Majesty to confer on you the highest distinction for merit at her command, one which, I believe, has never yet been conferred by her except for direct services to the State, and that is the Grand Order of the Bath.

"I will speak with frankness on another point. It is not well that in the sunset of your life you should be disturbed by common cares. I see no reason why a great author should not receive from the nation a pension, as well as a lawyer or statesman. Unfortunately, the personal power of her Majesty in this respect is limited ; but still, it is in the Queen's capacity to settle on an individual an amount equal to a good Fellowship, which was cheerfully accepted and enjoyed by the great spirit of Johnson and the pure integrity of Southey.

"Have the goodness to let me know your feelings on these subjects.

"I have the honour to remain, sir, your faithful servant,

"B. DISRAELI."

Carlyle's reply betrays—nay, openly expresses—the

pleasure which he had in receiving the offer—and in declining it. “Yesterday,” he wrote to the Prime Minister from Chelsea, “to my great surprise, I had the honour to receive your letter containing a magnificent proposal for my benefit, which will be memorable to me for the rest of my life. Allow me to say that the letter, both in purport and expression, is worthy to be called magnanimous and noble, that it is without example in my own poor history ; and I think it is unexampled, too, in the history of governing persons towards men of letters at the present, or at any time ; and that I will carefully preserve it as one of the things precious to memory and heart. A real treasure or benefit *it*, independent of all results from it.”

He then goes on to his refusal : “Except the feeling of your fine and noble conduct on this occasion, which is a real and permanent possession, there cannot anything be done that would not now be a sorrow rather than a pleasure.”

To others, Carlyle wrote in a strain of equal elation. The Disraeli he had despised became by this recognition of Carlyle much less of “a poor creature” than he had been reckoned heretofore. The Minister’s generosity was again commented upon, as something unexpected. Had he, one wonders, imagined that Disraeli bore a grudge against him as the overwhelming victor in a contest for the Lord Rectorship at Edinburgh ? The Sage began, it seems, to conceive of a Disraeli who

should be judged by ordinary standards ; and he even reproaches himself for his past possible misreadings. This one case is typical of a good many more cases in which the attitude of Disraeli's contemporaries towards him underwent a change on the possession of nearer knowledge. To this revolution even the Throne succumbed. Colleagues in the Cabinet needed and sought this salvation until they were able to say in the words of Sir Stafford Northcote : "Those who did know and love him, loved him very much."

Disraeli was, however, difficult enough to know. His life was absorbed by duties that all but confined him to Parliament, and indeed to the Front Bench, in office or opposition. This is one reason why we get so few friendly glimpses of Disraeli in the memoirs of his time. Yet a man of his time in all essentials he was. His literary style, for example, he inherited from his father, with a flavouring from Voltaire, an author who shared with Plato a supreme influence over different periods of his youth. The eighteenth century stilts of daily prose he did not cast wholly away all his life, lest his feet should fail him, as indeed in verse they did. If Byron helped him to a certain freedom, that very emancipation brought its limitations. He did not receive Wordsworth into his heart ; from Rossetti, poet or painter, he had no real illumination. The terms of his letter are a denial of front rank to Patmore, to Browning, to Ruskin, to Swinburne ; also to



Matthew Arnold, who, nevertheless, said of Disraeli that he was the only statesman of the day sensible of "the spell of Literature." If Disraeli had a mission of reconciliation between Christians and Jews, and has left a Testament not yet fully pondered over by the members of either his own race or ours, still, the mere fact that he was an alien and that throughout his career in the Commons he bore a Jewish name (taken for the very reason that it might be for ever recognised) kept aloof from him the leaders of religious thought. Bishops looked on him with suspicion, even Samuel Wilberforce, who had a sense of wit, and was, Disraeli found, "always good company" as a guest. To Evangelical Lord Shaftesbury Disraeli was as great an "enigma" as Isaac Disraeli had been to his own business-like father—a sort of puppet to be moved by Lord Shaftesbury's prayers, or, if those were not effectual, a brand not plucked from the burning. High Church Lord Selborne saw in him no more than "an actor with a mask he never tore off." Mr. Browning, who loved liberty of thought and even tolerated licence of act in his companioned outlook from Casa Guidi windows, had a sectarian flout for "Beaconsfield the Jew." The poet of shrewdness and "detection" was at least impartial in his detestation of the Hebrews and the monks; but with that sardonic temper Disraeli had no affinities. He was supple enough, if hearsay be



trusted, to introduce himself to Browning at an Academy Banquet—one more illustration of his tolerance in recognitions. To Carlyle himself, Disraeli applied the touchstone of tolerance; and the Jew taunt came at once to the pen that had been loudest in praise of Old Testament methods under Cromwell.

Disraeli, who had learned cosmopolitanism from the vicissitudes of his ancestors, and had it, so to say, in his blood, could not be exclusive in his dealings with nations or persons. He would not hound down the Turk in continuance of an historical vendetta. He would not see Ireland, with his young eyes, through English spectacles—he would have it governed, he said, according to Stuart and not according to Cromwellian traditions. He would not judge of Chartism by its excesses, nor yet turn on individuals with derision. There again was the barrier between him and Carlyle. He distrusted, as evidence of any possession of heroic virtue, that easy scorn of others—the least pardonable form of egotism—which passed for wisdom in Chelsea; and the *Memoirs*, which he lived to see published, confirmed his faith in good-nature and his doubt of scorn. It was by his habit of even-handedness that he made Carlyle reconsider his estimate of Disraeli as “a superlative Hebrew conjuror.” Carlyle wrote on the “horny-handed brother”; Disraeli placed in that hand a vote; and Carlyle despaired. The same note of callous derision,

differently applied by Thackeray, had the unique effect of almost excluding that author from the otherwise unlimited charity of Disraeli ; for Universalism itself excludes from its scope one Son of Perdition. Those who seek and find in *Codlingsby* a cause of the estrangement have little appreciation of either literary satire or Disraeli's disregard of it. The only other person with whom, in the end, Disraeli lost patience—and the reason seems intelligible—was his Vavasour of *Tancred*, the first Lord Houghton.

If Disraeli did not hail the theory of Evolution (which, part in prophecy, part in perversity, he had ridiculed years before its coming), he did not dogmatise against it in the fashion of the Tory editor of the *Quarterly*, who said *ex cathedra* that "it was practically synonymous with infidelity." This Whitwell Elwin, one recalls, had been equally unreceptive to Disraeli on his first appearing. He thought the "new spirit" synonymous with Radicalism. Confronted with Darwin, Disraeli ranged himself "on the side of the angels." In his own department, in politics, he was a consistent Evolutionist throughout. And he made his own discoveries and inventions—he made his Queen an Empress ; and from the agricultural serf he sought to evolve the peasant. The slaves of the mines and the factories—some of them the young children whose "cry" Mrs. Browning sent echoing through England, till it was heard above the owners' counter-

cry of the "sacred freedom of contract"—he helped to free. He invented, amid laughter that is echo-less to-day, the "Conservative working-man." Together with his kindred spirits of Young England, he pleaded, again amid derision from the champions of "freedom of contract," for National Holidays, which became law later, when some one had the wit—or the understood and welcomed want of it—to call them, not National, but "Bank." He advocated also, and also amid ridicule, those sports on the village green, uniting classes, which have since made all England a playground. He cried *Sanitas ! Sanitas ! Sanitas !* at election times—a pioneer indeed ; and his constant reminder, "I do not see what is the use of there being gentlemen unless they are the leaders of the people," began that return of men of station to civic duty—his own Lothair, as luck had it, setting the example of a marquis serving as a mayor. And when Lord Rosebery speaks of the "efficiency" possible if the successful ruler of his own trade things were made ruler over the nation's great things, he does but put into words what Disraeli put into acts when Mr. W. H. Smith was translated to the Treasury Bench.

And in each one of these experiments, justified by time, he had from a large section of his countrymen not only no encouragement, but not even the tribute of reasoned opposition. He had instead this derision, which was too ignoble to be called



scorn, this complacent ridicule of which Carlyle was the master. He was the "superlative Hebrew conjuror," and John Bull was reviled because he let "this Jew jump upon his stomach." The humour, like the rhetoric, of one generation is the weariness of another; even Disraeli's rhetoric palls. But the derision of one generation does not last longer than its humour or its rhetoric; and we are all but free now in our public life and in our newspapers from the self-sufficient ribaldry which held its sway over the greater part of the Victorian era. Carlyle stood for that; Disraeli for tolerance, for understanding. Here we see these protagonists face to face; and it is now Carlyle who seems to look another way. He searches, perhaps, for a new heaven now, as here for a new earth.



### ***Impressions of a Private Member***

*"To all to whom these Presents shall come: the Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli sendeth greeting."*

So began the notification that honorary office had been assigned to a member of Parliament who desired to vacate his seat, as Mr. Beresford Hope did in 1868, when he left one constituency for another—that other being Cambridge University, which he successfully carried. He was not a loyal supporter of Disraeli, to whom, nevertheless, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had to apply for the office that freed





Lord Rowton. Lord Wharnccliffe. Lord Wharnccliffe. Lord Beaconsfield.  
Lady Bradford. Lord Wharnccliffe. Lord Pembroke.

*Photo by H. W. Taunt & Co., Oxford.*

A GROUP AT HUGHENDEN.



him from the seat he already held. All people have heard of these "Presents," but few, even among seasoned Parliamentarians, have actually handled them. I quote from the MS. of the document issued to Beresford Hope:

"Know ye that I, the said Benjamin Disraeli, have constituted and appointed, and by these Presents do constitute and appoint, Alexander J. B. Beresford Hope to be Steward and Bailiff of the Manor of Northstead, in the County of York, with the returns of all writs, and warrants, and executions of the same, in the room and place of George Poulett Scrope, whose constitution to the said offices I do hereby revoke and determine together with all wages, fees, allowances, and other privileges and pre-eminences whatsoever to the said offices of Steward and Bailiff belonging or in any wise appertaining, with full power and authority to hold and keep courts, and to do all and every other Act and Acts, thing and things, which to the said offices of Steward and Bailiff of the Manor aforesaid do belong or in any wise appertain. In witness whereof" (and of a superfluous more) "I have hereunto set my hand and seal the 12th day of February in the 31st year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, and in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-Eight.

"Signed and delivered

in the presence of

Montagu Corry.

"B. DISRAELI."

Strange were the relations between Disraeli and Beresford Hope, a member of the (rather disunited) family of the Hopes of Amsterdam, who brought their fortunes (and misfortunes) to London; and to one of whom, Henry Hope of Deepdene, Disraeli dedicated *Coningsby*, conceived in those Surrey glades which, close by, at Boxhill, were to be the scene of Mr. George Meredith's later creations. Alexander Beresford Hope was of the group hostile to his leader; and that hostility was not diminished by his marriage with Lady Mildred Cecil, a sister of Lord Robert Cecil, later known as Disraeli's colleague and critic-on-the-hearth, Lord Cranborne (afterwards Marquis of Salisbury). As the uncle of Mr. Arthur Balfour, the leader to be, Beresford Hope has a certain further interest for us who, knowing what we now know, take a long retrospect. As the owner of the *Saturday Review* also, Beresford Hope had an influence which Disraeli felt weekly turned against himself, both as man and as Reformer. The High Church Movement was so near his heart that to Gladstone, who often walked in early days from the Albany to worship in the Church of All Saints, Margaret Street, which Beresford Hope built, he gave a greater trust than he ever accorded to his own leader. One famous sparring match—only "match" is not the word—that passed between them in the House is of inevitable quotation. That was when, in 1867, Beresford Hope



declared that "although a Conservative, he would never fall down and worship the golden image set up in the deserts of Arabia," and that, dissolution or no dissolution, "he, for one, would, with his whole heart and conscience, vote against the Asian Mystery." The uncouthness of the allusions was accompanied by an uncouthness of gesture and of general appearance—the uncouthness which seems always at its awkwardest in a long-bearded man. Quite unperturbed was Disraeli's reply to "his honourable friend," whose style, he said, "is very ornamental in discussion, and when he talks to me of Asian Mystery I may reply to him by an allusion to Batavian grace." The Holland origin of this imitative brother-in-law of "the master of taunts and gibes," and the unwieldy gestures which, an hour before, had accompanied his indictment, made Disraeli's an instant hit; and ever since that day Dutch courage has found in Batavian grace gay company in our language. The great division which followed showed Gladstone's amendments to Disraeli's Reform Bill beaten by twenty-one votes.

It was a scene of wild excitement, for it marked the triumph of Disraeli over the foes of his own household; handkerchiefs and hats were waved, salvo after salvo of cheers was discharged, on the principle, long established in the Island, that a noise, and generally a discordant one, is essential to the con-

summation of all great events and to the marking of all great emotions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer sat silent, and would have sat motionless, but that members crowded about him, shaking him by the hand. "The working of his face," said an eye-witness, "alone showed how tremendous had been the strain of the last few hours."

Beresford Hope did not confine to the House of Commons his expressions of discontent under Disraeli's leadership. Four years earlier Lord John Manners, between whom and Hope there was a kinship of Church interests, addressed to him, in a letter now before me, a reproof such as one expects and welcomes from him who was always loyal to Disraeli. "Your Church Rate speech I received, read, and entirely disapproved of. The existence of a Church, apart from the Tory party, is a chimera ; and the hardly disguised attack upon Disraeli, the acknowledged leader of the Tory party in the House of Commons, at once repels from you all who follow his lead. I had hoped, when you came forward for the University, that all such feelings were for ever abandoned, and that you had enlisted fairly under Lord Derby's banner. The time for hair-splitting and wire-drawing has passed away ; and unless Churchmen are prepared to support the Tory leaders they must make up their minds to lose all power and influence in public affairs."

That frank avowal did not frighten Beresford Hope into line. Through my hands have passed a number of letters written by him both before and after this date to a friend of his in Germany, Dr. Reichensperger, one of the Centre leaders in the German Reichstag. He and Beresford Hope were brother Goths, so that Cologne Cathedral there, and Sir Gilbert Scott's buildings here, were the themes of a correspondence into which, however, Disraeli intruded himself very much as the Devil himself was reported to have done in the matter of the designs for the towers of Cologne. These letters, dated from Bedgebury Park, from the House itself, or from his town residence at the east end of Connaught Place (no house, one thinks, for a disciple of Pugin, who said that a man could not pray in an ill-designed church), yield extracts which are worth quotation as a sort of mutineer's log-book. After the change from a Conservative to a Liberal Government in 1859, Beresford Hope rejoices :

"The Liberals being in power with only the narrowest majority, will strive to keep their places by *gratifying* their opponents ; *i.e.*, they will govern in a Conservative sense for fear the Conservatives should be strong enough to turn them out if they took the Radical line. *Per contra*, if the Conservatives were in now with that reckless, unprincipled adventurer Disraeli at their head, they would not unlikely try to keep themselves in by bidding for the support of the



*Radicals* and detaching them from the Whigs and moderate Liberals. This has of old been Disraeli's most dangerous and pernicious game. Accordingly, every one believes that if the present Government brings in a Reform Bill next session, it will be a very moderate one, and that, if Parliamentary Reform is inevitable, it may be settled off by the present Government, who are the natural party to do so as the representatives of those who passed the last Reform Bill, and so an end be made of the question."

In April, 1860, Hope seems to give Disraeli the discredit (as he thinks it) of even any possible Liberal Reform Bill: "What I said to you in my last letter about the *general Conservatism* of public feeling at present is amply shown by the general contempt and dislike which is manifested on all sides, even amongst advanced Liberals, for Lord John Russell's vulgar and levelling Reform Bill. But unluckily, thanks to Disraeli's crooked policy, all men are so committed that *after all* it may be necessary to pass the measure, though I trust not without *ameliorations* such as in the Houses of Parliament may be made in Committee, either of the Commons or the Lords."

The question of Prince Albert's taste is a delicate one. But, where public expression of opinion was given sparingly, the frank private judgment of Mr. Beresford Hope is all the better worth having. Yet even into this bounces the King's head—Disraeli is



at the bottom of the mischief. He writes in the June of 1863 :

“Gothic art had a victory in Scott having been selected to build the Albert Memorial, which will, in his hands, assume the form of a kind of *baldacchino* covering the statue from which a lofty *flèche* will spring. . . . It was poor Prince Albert's misfortune to get into the hands of an indescribable *entourage en fait d'art*. He knew a great deal of facts ; but he had very little taste, and yet tried to do things himself (he was always averse from employing a regular architect, and preferred inferior people, who licked his own notions into practical shape). That clique found this out, flattered him continuously, and so established an art bureaucracy, which was becoming even more oppressive after his death than before, because they had got the ear of the Queen (who has no knowledge of such things), and persuaded her that every job of their own was ‘the lamented Prince's wish.’ The nation were sick of, and indignant with, this clique and their bureaucracy, and they showed their feeling by rising in a perfect insurrection in the House of Commons against the leaders of *both* sides (for Disraeli was playing courtier and assisting the Government). There was so exciting a scene that night as was never seen in the House”—the night when Parliament refused to buy the Exhibition building of 1862.

The success of Lord Palmerston at the elections

of 1866, Hope attributes, not to a national democratic tendency, but to the fact that "the people do not generally trust the wisdom or discretion of Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli (especially the latter) to lead the Conservative Party." The way to a leadership more agreeable to Mr. Beresford Hope begins, however, to open. "By the death of his eldest brother, my wife's brother, Lord Robert Cecil, has become Lord Cranborne, and heir to their father, the Marquis of Salisbury. This change of position from younger to eldest son will, I trust, improve his prospects as one of our most rising Conservative statesmen." A year later, Mr. Gladstone (whose rejection at Oxford a previous letter described as a "mistake") is rather given up as a political bad job. "I mourn over Gladstone, for whom I have the greatest personal regard, but apparently he has run wild." A little later Gladstone is again alluded to, now as "a man of infinite probity and genius but doctrinaire and enthusiastic—an unusual combination of character, but existing in him." As a set-off, he can chronicle that "Lord Cranborne has gained great credit as Indian Minister." In the May of 1867, Beresford Hope refers triumphantly to "the magnificent series of designs (eleven in number and all Gothic) sent in for the new Law Courts," adding, "The best of these is undoubtedly that of Burges." But when the lover of architecture possessed his soul

in peace, it was otherwise with the politician. The Reform Bill of 1867 was before the House, and Beresford Hope sees enemies on all sides, what with "the rash, romantic enthusiasm and vanity of Gladstone on the one side, and the serpent-like cunning of Disraeli on the other" :

"Gladstone's bill last year was thrown out because it was thought to be too democratic. Now the Conservatives bring forward another measure which is infinitely more democratic. My brother-in-law gave up the Secretaryship of State for India rather than prostitute his convictions to the retention of office."

A letter from Mr. Beresford Hope to Dr. Reichensperger dated Christmas, 1867, does not deal much with politics, for during a short session "the opportune illness of Mrs. Disraeli saved the leader from any embarrassing cross-questioning." Elected member for the University of Cambridge, Mr. Hope writes in March, 1868 :

"Mr. Disraeli was not much pleased at my success, but he would not *openly* oppose me, though his sympathies and secret influence went with Mr. Cleasby, who was a *partisan* follower of his, and not (as I am) an *independent* Conservative. . . ."

"No one can tell," he writes in August that year, "what will be the result of the General Election, though I believe and fear it will give a very large majority to the Liberals. After Mr. Disraeli's



desertion of all the traditionary principles of Conservatism, it is impossible for a party to work together merely for the purpose of keeping in power a Ministry which has abandoned the doctrines for the sake of which it pretended to have accepted office."

In September 1876, we have the customary smack of politics again :

"You will have heard that the country is in a state of excitement on the Eastern Question, but I am sure the policy of the Government will approve itself to sensible after-thoughts, although undoubtedly the speeches of Mr. Disraeli were far from wise or dignified. He has not left the House of Commons a day too soon, for all through last session he was visibly too old and feeble to carry on effectually the office (so laborious both morally and physically) of Leader of the House of Commons."

In March, 1877, "Lord Beaconsfield is intolerable" about the Turks ; and "Gladstone's vehemence against them is unpractical and vague, and, therefore, in a politician a great blunder" ; but "happily through it all the conduct of my brother-in-law has been such as to raise him more and more in the eyes of all patriotic and reasonable persons." In April, 1878, he says : "The general conviction is that the hopes of peace are increased by the firm position and clear language which Salisbury has taken up, and his utterances in his recent circular. That paper has excited great



attention, and all but universal admiration. He wrote it on the very day upon which he accepted office, *currente calamo*, and without even the assistance of a secretary, beginning it at 10.30 in the evening and finishing it about 4 a.m. . . . Derby was an excellent, most valorous, and able man; but he had not the *élan* or the distinctive knowledge of Continental affairs necessary for the office. In the meanwhile, the Administration is very popular and the Liberals are split up into factions and discredited."

Then in the memorable August of that year (1878): "My thoughts have much turned to Berlin lately while my brother-in-law was there. The general enthusiasm which has met *him and Lord Beaconsfield*" (one notes the family order of precedence) "since their return is a most remarkable feature, and a good augury for the longer continuance in power of the Conservatives—or Tories, as our good old name is. It has been noted that theirs was the first instance that the Corporation of London had ever given its freedom by a *unanimous* vote for political services—political as contrasted with military. But what are we to say to the lost reputations? Gladstone, once so powerful and now so thoroughly low, on one side, in spite of his inexhaustible activity and splendid eloquence! Lord Derby, too, has thoroughly collapsed since his cowardice drove him from office, and since the scandal of his real and of his pretended (I

am sorry to say) revelations of Cabinet secrets. It is charitable and, I trust, correct to suppose some freak of the intellect which has made him believe those extravagant assertions."

With Disraeli's death, Beresford Hope did not, I note, find Parliament a paradise wholly cleared of serpents. Gladstone's "mismanagement is past belief" in 1882, and in the Home Rule proposals of 1886 "plays an inconceivable and disgraceful part." Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, has delivered "a very able and statesmanlike speech, crushing in its calm severity." We get very near home in the last letter I shall quote, when yet another possible leader of the party, not a Cecil, came in view. That letter is dated from Hatfield House, Hatfield, Herts, January 5th, 1887 :

"Lord Randolph Churchill has been behaving like a *gamin* and not like a statesman ; but with Mr. Goschen's adherence to the Government the loss is more than made good, for there is no public man more respected and trusted than Goschen. Lord Salisbury bears his sorrows and anxieties very well, and, in fact, Lord Randolph Churchill's departure, instead of being a loss, is a great gain to the stability of the Administration."

In the House of Commons to-day are Mr. Coningsby Disraeli and Mr. Winston Churchill, whose last words are yet to be spoken. But how hint at a righteous political vendetta where Disraeli is concerned,





10. Downing Street,

Whitehall.

Jan 19 .79

Dear W Hope

I have the  
pleasure to inform  
you, that, this

afternoon, on my  
proposal,

Alex. H. Hope Esq  
M. P.



Proposal, you were  
elected a Trustee  
of the British  
Museum.

Yrs faithfully  
Beaconsfield.



who never answered grudge by grudge? Before me lie three of his letters to Beresford Hope, each one of them conferring a favour which Beresford Hope in every instance consented to receive from those "unprincipled"—those generous—hands. Beresford Hope is no more; but the memory of Disraeli's magnanimity remains.

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*Hope—and Charity.*

TO ALEXANDER JOHN BERESFORD HOPE, M.P.

"10, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,

"March 19th, 1879.

"DEAR MR. HOPE,—I have the pleasure to inform you that, this afternoon, on my proposal, you were elected a Trustee of the British Museum.

"Yours faithfully,

"BEACONSFIELD."

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*To Alexander J. Beresford Hope, M.P.*

(Private.)

"10, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,

"June 23rd, 1879.

"SIR,—Her Majesty being about to issue a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the several cathedral churches in England and Wales and the Cathedral Church of Christ Church in the University of Oxford, and into the duties of the members and ministers thereof and other

matters connected therewith, and whether any further legislation with respect to the same is expedient, and, especially, whether further powers should be granted for revising, from time to time, the statutes of the several capítular bodies, and, if so, by what authority and in what manner such powers should be exercised ; I should be glad if you would permit me to submit your name to the Queen for appointment as a member of the Commission.

“ I have the honour to be, sir, yours faithfully,  
“ BEACONSFIELD.”

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*To Alexander J. Beresford Hope, Esq.*

“ 10, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,  
“ *April 19th, 1880.*

“ DEAR BERESFORD HOPE,—It is with much pleasure that I have to acquaint you of her Majesty’s gracious commands that you should attend at Windsor to-morrow to be sworn a member of her Majesty’s Most Honourable Privy Council.

“ Sincerely yours,  
“ BEACONSFIELD.”



*The Minister and the Cardinal**Fenianism and Cardinal "Grandison."*

TO CARDINAL MANNING.

"GROSVENOR GATE,

"April 26th, 1867.

"MY DEAR LORD,—I am honoured and gratified by the receipt of your Grace's Pastoral, which I shall read, especially on the subject you mention, of Fenianism, with still greater interest, since I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the writer.

"Believe me, with great consideration, your faithful servant,

"B. DISRAELI."

The letter bears, but does not exhaust, its interest on its surface. It was the first interchange of written courtesies between two inflexible men, who had lately met one another, partly as antagonists, for Manning was still politically, though not religiously and not temperamentally, a Gladstonian: the Irish Church Disestablishment Resolutions were to defeat Disraeli and to exhilarate Manning in the following year. For the present, Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had already in his head the plan of a novel which, in "out of office" hours of the next two years, he got seriously to work upon and published in 1870 as *Lothair*. In that book, be it noted, Fenianism is treated with Manning's seriousness;

the power of secret societies is recognised ; and Manning himself is introduced, not very recognisably in any but outward features, as Cardinal Grandison : "About the middle height, his stature seemed magnified by the attenuation of his form. It seemed that the soul never had so frail and fragile a tenement. His countenance was naturally of an extreme pallor, though at this moment slightly flushed. His cheeks were hollow, and his grey eyes seemed sunk into his clear and noble brow, but they flashed with irresistible penetration." You get the penetration without the flashing eye in Disraeli, whose description, made on a slight acquaintance, was exact even to the subtlety of Manning's height erecting itself above his mere inches, a symbol of his own soaring of spirit above all matter.

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*A Papal Allocution.*

"2, WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.,

"April 9th, 1877.

"DEAR LORD CARDINAL,—It was most courteous and considerate in you sending to me an authentic copy of the allocution of his Holiness, which I shall read with interest and attention.

"Believe me, very faithfully yours,

"BEACONSFIELD."

Ten years had passed since Cardinal Manning sent one of his own pastorals to the Chancellor of the

Exchequer ; now he sent a Pontiff's encyclical to the Prime Minister. "Much had happened" in the interval. *Lothair* had appeared, with a personal sketch, already quoted, that surely could not be displeasing to the Cardinal ; but, in the novel, that ascetic frame had been perversely made the abode of the conventional ecclesiastic's spirit—the zeal which compasses drawing-rooms and dinner-tables for a proselyte ; the caution that degenerates into cunning. But *Vaticanism* too had been sent forth from the other tent, and all those other pamphlets which Mr. Forster ingenuously wished his leader would not write ; and under this assault and battery the Radical Cardinal, who wore the red and was red at heart, took cover in the Conservative ranks.

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*Five Cabinets to Peel's Four.*

(*Private.*)

"10, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,  
"January 30th, 1879.

"MY DEAR LORD CARDINAL,—I will take care of Lady Hackett's case. It shall be well considered.

"I regret very much your going away, for I fear your visit may be protracted. I, literally, cannot leave my house in this savage weather ; otherwise, I should attempt to call on your Eminence.

"I came here, a fortnight ago, in a snowstorm,

and I have never since quitted this roof. But I have not been idle, for I have held five Cabinets in a week, a feat unprecedented in the annals of Downing Street. Sir Robert Peel once held four, but they were not so tranquil as these later ones.

"Your travel is a great venture in this severe season. I earnestly hope that Rome will welcome you, uninjured by the effort.

"Ever, my dear Lord Cardinal, sincerely yours,

"BEACONSFIELD."

As a sign of the growing friendliness between the Minister and the Cardinal, and also as an evidence of the reverting of the Minister's mind to the days of that predecessor whose greatness he had brought low, the letter is memorable. There was no other romance in the letter, though it opens with the name of a lady and is addressed to one who had credited Cardinal Grandison with surprising spiritual conquests of the sex: "The Cardinal was an entire believer in female influence, and a considerable believer in his influence over females; and he had good cause for his convictions. The catalogue of his proselytes was numerous and distinguished. He had not only converted a duchess and several countesses, but he had gathered into his fold a real Mary Magdalen." In the height of her beauty and her fame "she had suddenly thrown up her golden whip and jingling reins, and cast herself at





*Photo by H. W. Taunt & Co., Oxford.*

HUGHENDEN MANOR, BUCKS.

The residence of Disraeli, 1849—1881.



the feet of the Cardinal." This passage offended the taste of the Cardinal, and the time is not yet, even now, when it can be cited as an evidence of the precision of contemporary fact turned by Disraeli to the purposes of fiction.

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*Downing Street and Propaganda.*

"10, DOWNING STREET,

"July 11th, 1879.

"MY DEAR LORD CARDINAL,—I send you the promised *précis*, which will, I hope, assist your Eminence in your communication with the Propaganda, and show that her Majesty's Government is not liable to the charges brought against them.

"Ever faithfully yours,  
"BEACONSFIELD."

The *précis*, referring to a delicate matter of ecclesiastical diplomacy, had been promised in one of those personal interviews which Lord Beaconsfield put to good purpose in *Endymion*.

"*Fierce with Faction even among the most responsible.*"

"HUGHENDEN MANOR,

"December 31st, 1879.

"MY DEAR LORD CARDINAL,—Your kind wishes to me for the New Year touch me much, and I reciprocate them with a perfect cordiality.

In the dark and disturbing days on which we have fallen, so fierce with faction even among the most responsible, the voice of patriotism from one so eminent as yourself will animate the faltering and add courage even to the brave.

“Believe me, with deep regard, yours,  
“BEACONSFIELD.”

This last letter, written during “the dark and disturbing days” which preceded that expulsion of Lord Beaconsfield from official life which his death a year later made final, shows the establishment of those cordial relations between the two men of which further evidence was to be given and received on the publication of *Endymion* :

“They were speaking of Nigel Penruddock, whose movements had been a matter of much mystery during the last two years. Rumours of his having been received into the Roman Church had been rife ; sometimes flatly, and in time faintly, contradicted. Now the fact seemed admitted, and it would appear that he was about to return to England, not only as a Roman Catholic, but as a distinguished priest of the Church ; and, it was said, even the representative of the Papacy. Nigel was changed. Instead of that anxious and moody look which formerly marred the refined beauty of his countenance, his glance was calm and yet radiant. He was thinner, it might almost be said emaciated, which seemed to add height to his tall figure. . . .



All he spoke of was the magnitude of his task, the immense but inspiring labours which awaited him, and his deep sense of his responsibility. Nothing but the divine principle of the Church could sustain him. Instead of avoiding society, as was his wont in old days, the Archbishop sought it. And there was nothing exclusive in his social habits ; all classes and all creeds and all conditions of men were alike interesting to him ; they were part of the community, with all whose pursuits, and passions, and interests, and occupations he seemed to sympathise ; but respecting which he had only one object—to bring them back once more to that imperial fold from which, in an hour of darkness and distraction, they had miserably wandered. The conversion of England was deeply engraven on the heart of Penruddock ; it was his constant purpose and his daily and nightly prayer. So the Archbishop was seen everywhere, even at fashionable assemblies. He was a frequent guest at banquets, which he never tasted, for he was a smiling ascetic ; and though he seemed to be preaching or celebrating Mass in every part of the metropolis, organising schools, establishing convents, and building cathedrals, he could find time to move resolutions at middle-class meetings, attend learned associations, and even send a paper to the Royal Society.”

To the nice discrimination of outward form, in

the case of Cardinal Grandison, was now added, in the case of Archbishop Penruddock, a tribute, couched almost tenderly, to his inward convictions, his rectitude of soul as well as of body, his missionary aims. The Cardinal knew the difference between this portrait and that in *Lothair*; and, so far as he allowed himself to dwell on it, did so with gratification. "It is quite another story," was his admission, made to me with evident pleasure.



**"A Broken Spirit"**

*To Lady Dorothy Nevill (after the death of the Viscountess Beaconsfield).*

"HUGHENDEN MANOR,

"January 31st, 1873.

"MY DEAR DOROTHY,—I was grateful to you for your sympathy in my great affliction—the supreme sorrow of my life.

"You knew her well; she was much attached to you, and never thought or spoke of you but with kindness and pleasure.

"Throughout more than a moiety of my existence she was my inseparable and ever interesting companion. I cannot, in any degree, subdue the anguish of my heart.

"I leave this, now my only home, on Monday next for the scene of my old labours. I have made an attempt to disentangle myself from them,

but have failed. I feel quite incapable of the duties, but my friends will be indulgent to a broken spirit, and my successor will in time appear.

“Adieu ! dear Dorothy, and believe me

“Ever yours

“D.”

This dear friend was a daughter of the third Earl of Orford, and the author of a history of the Walpoles. Lady Dorothy was a near neighbour of Disraeli's during the happiest years of his life, when he occupied the Grosvenor Gate house, alienated from him by Lady Beaconsfield's death—hence the allusion to Hughenden as his “only home.” Miss Meresia Nevill, Lady Dorothy's daughter, has among her childhood's memories those of the statesman who took her upon his knee, little dreaming that he was rocking there the future ruling lady of those Leagues of Primroses which were to rise from his ashes.



### ***The Lytton Viceroyalty of India***

*To Robert, afterwards Earl of Lytton.*

“2, WHITEHALL GARDENS, S.W.,

“November 23rd, 1875.

“MY DEAR LYTTON,—Lord Northbrook has resigned the Viceroyalty of India, for purely domestic reasons, and will return to England in the spring.

“If you be willing, I will submit your name to the Queen as his successor. The critical state of affairs in Central Asia demands a statesman, and I believe

if you will accept this high post you will have an opportunity, not only of serving your country, but of obtaining an enduring fame.

“Yours sincerely,

“B. DISRAELI.”

The sequel of this brave offer may be found in *The History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration*, 1876 to 1880, by Lady Betty Balfour (Longmans). The writing of it must have gratified at once Disraeli the Imperialist and Disraeli the man; the one with his dreams of Empire, the other with memories of the father of the Viceroy-Elect—his own first great friend. “The East is a career,” he had said in *Tancred*; and, even in moments of depression when he could write, as he did to Lord Malmesbury: “These wretched Colonies will all be independent, too, in a few years, and are a millstone round our neck,” India was outside his moody vision.



### *The Antagonists*

*To the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.*

[August, 1879.]

“Lord Beaconsfield presents his compliments to Mr. Gladstone, and he has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of his letter referring to some remarks made by Lord Beaconsfield last night in the House of Lords, and requesting to be supplied ‘with a list of offensive epithets applied not merely to Lord Beaconsfield’s measures, but to



his personal character, and with a note of the times and places at which they were used.'

"As this would require a search over a period of seven years and a half, during which Mr. Gladstone, to use his own expression at Oxford, has been counter-working 'by day and night, week by week, and month by month' the purposes of Lord Beaconsfield, his lordship, who is at this moment much pressed with affairs, is obliged to request those gentlemen who are kind enough to assist him in the conduct of public business to undertake the necessary researches, which probably may require some little time; but that Lord Beaconsfield, by such delay in replying to Mr. Gladstone, may not appear wanting in becoming courtesy, he must observe with reference to the Oxford speech referred to in the House of Lords, which was one long invective against the Government, that Mr. Gladstone then remarked 'that when he spoke of the Government he meant Lord Beaconsfield, who was alone responsible, and by whom the great name of England had been degraded and debased.'

"In the same spirit a few days back, at Southwark, Lord Beaconsfield was charged with 'an act of duplicity of which every Englishman should be ashamed; an act of duplicity which has not been surpassed,' and, Mr. Gladstone believed, 'has been rarely equalled in the history of nations.' Such an act must be expected, however, from a

Minister who, according to Mr. Gladstone, had 'sold the Greeks.'

"With regard to the epithet 'devilish' which Lord Beaconsfield used in the House of Lords, he is informed that it was not Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden who compared Lord Beaconsfield to Mephistopheles, but only one of Mr. Gladstone's friends kindly inquiring of Mr. Gladstone how they were 'to get rid of this Mephistopheles,' and as Mr. Gladstone proceeded to explain the mode—probably the Birmingham caucus—Lord Beaconsfield may perhaps be excused for assuming that Mr. Gladstone sanctioned the propriety of the scarcely complimentary appellation."

An exchange of letters between the two leaders was of the rarest occurrence; and in all cases Mr. Gladstone's good faith, but also his obliquity, seems to be indicated. The habit of identifying himself with the Deity and his opponent with the Devil had been of long growth; and now, since habit makes saints unconscious of their sanctity and sinners of their sin, he put forth a challenge, unconscious, it would seem, of the bearing of the words he had habitually used. Red-hot pincers were the Devil-due weapon. The personal equation, in matters of controversy, counts for much among combatants; and Gladstone had, from the first, formed a mean opinion of Disraeli. There are those who say that he joined the Liberal ranks because he could not

bear association with Disraeli in the Tory ; and Lord Derby, as we know, made him the first offer of the Exchequer, Disraeli putting himself aside purposely, and only accepting what, and when, the other had declined. "Lord Beaconsfield," said Lord George Hamilton after his leader's death—and the words are elucidatory here—"was subject to much calumny and much libel. I doubt if any man ever lived in this country who was more systematically calumniated. It really seemed at one time as if there were a conspiracy to misrepresent everything he did and to misinterpret everything he said. So, little by little, and by dint of constant reiteration, an impression was formed by those who did not know Lord Beaconsfield's character, objects, and past career, utterly at variance with truth. He was represented as a cynical, reckless man, thinking only of his aggrandisement, and ready for that purpose on any flimsy pretext to involve his country in war. I had the honour of the most personal acquaintance with the late lord, and I can say this, that I never met a kinder man in his private capacity or a more patriotic man in his public capacity. But it became a cardinal point in the creed of many of our opponents that Lord Beaconsfield was the author of all evil, that he represented all that was bad in human nature, and that his rival represented all that was good."

Under this galling system of aspersion, the habit of



silence sometimes became too difficult ; and when Mr. Gladstone denounced the Anglo-Turkish Convention as "insane," Lord Beaconsfield, over the board spread in honour of the Berlin Conference, labelled him "a sophistical rhetorician inebriated by the exuberance of his own verbosity and gifted with an egotistical imagination that at all times commanded an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign his opponents and justify himself." Another quotation, this time from a speech made thirty years earlier, will illustrate the feeling that, at the end of his life, was borne in upon him more urgently than ever by the passionate attacks made upon proposals which were held criminal because they were his, but which history has justified. "Now, gentlemen," he said to the electors of Bucks, "I have had some experience of public life, and during that time I have seen a great deal done and more pretended, by what are called 'moral' means ; and, being naturally of a thoughtful temperament, I have been induced to analyse what moral means are. I will tell you what I have found them to consist of. I have found them to consist of three qualities—enormous lying, inexhaustible boasting, intense selfishness." The words uttered in 1879 seem only a graver version of the words uttered in 1850 ; and they went at last to the great rival weighted and pointed with the approbation of the Sovereign. She did not conceal her coldness for the man who had,





*Photo by J. P. Starling, Hugh Wycombe.*

DISRAELI'S WRITING-ROOM AT HUGHENDEN,  
Showing family portraits over the mantel-piece.



in her opinion, by such "moral" means deposed her Favourite Minister. Lord Granville, himself free from complicity in such methods, was put up in the House of Lords to deprecate the picture drawn of his colleague. Then it was that Lord Beaconsfield repeated his charge against Gladstone as the utterer of epithets which were offensive personally as well as politically. The rival humbly demanded the where and the when. Lord Beaconsfield's reply, now printed, was supplemented by the series of Gladstone extracts breathing passionate moral indignation against the policy of "that man," whom he had emerged from his retirement again and again to denounce and finally to defeat.



*"I Love the Queen"*

*To the Marchioness of Ely.*

*(Confidential.)*

"HUGHENDEN MANOR,

"September 4th, 1879.

"DEAREST FRIEND,—I must thank you at once for your kind and considerate letter, worthy of your unfailing friendship, which has often been to me a consolation. I am grieved, and greatly, that anything I should say, or do, should be displeasing to her Majesty.

"I love the Queen—perhaps the only person in this world left to me that I do love; and therefore you can understand how much it worries and

disquiets me when there is a cloud between us. It is very foolish on my part, but my heart, unfortunately, has not withered like my frame, and when it is affected, I am as harassed as I was fifty years ago.

"I received the Queen's letter yesterday, and wrote to her Majesty last night. I wish to see the Queen Dictatress of Europe : many things are preparing which for the sake of peace and civilisation render it most necessary that her Majesty should occupy that position. This unhappy African war has much interfered with my plans, and therefore some sense of annoyance on my part may be understood and perhaps pardoned.

"You are kind to ask after my health, and I am glad to give you the most satisfactory bulletin. No doubt the extreme regularity of my life tends to that happy result, but, like the King of Spain, I have sought charm and consolation among the pine forests of Arcachon—*i.e.*, in plain prose, I place on my table when I retire to rest a vase of the resin of those magical trees, and they have relieved me now from all my foes : fell asthma and exhausting bronchitis. It is like the balsam which the dames of chivalry conferred on suffering knights—but, happily, you have neither to touch nor taste it.

"Yours affectionately,

"BEACONSFIELD."

Lord Beaconsfield, when he wrote this letter, did not know that Sir Louis Cavagnari and the other





Confidential

Gughenden

Manor.

Sept 4

79

Dearest friend!

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& considerate letter  
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consolation -

Yr  
Thos. D. of Ely

✓

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                    Heacounfield



members of his Mission were lying murdered in the British Residency at Cabul. Neither the Queen nor Disraeli heard the dire news till two days later. The South African war which had disconcerted him was thus followed by a complication yet more inimical to his plan for making his Sovereign the dictatress of Europe—a figure of speech for leading lady of Christendom, as, despite all ill-luck, she undoubtedly was. The Berlin Congress of a few months earlier was still fresh in his mind ; the Garter had followed and the speech in which the Minister described himself and his colleagues as “English gentlemen honoured by the favour of their Sovereign” and Gladstone as a “sophistical rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign an opponent and to glorify himself.” No doubt this letter, as near a love-letter as circumstances permitted, and only possible, even so, because addressed to a third person, was intended for the Queen’s eye. That, at any rate, was Lady Ely’s opinion. A telegram summoned him to Windsor and the little cloud of trouble between the Queen and her Favourite Minister melted away. Such misunderstandings of a moment had crossed their paths before—to pass as quickly. Disraeli’s first conception of the Royal Titles Bill, for instance, a little

alarmed the future Empress of India. She hesitated at the introductory hint of Disraeli, who nevertheless was generally considered "out of doors" to be merely the catspaw of the Court, the "subservient Minister" once again.



### *The Queen's Favourite Minister*

Queen Victoria's reputation as a judge of men and as a woman of affairs must stand or fall with the fame of Disraeli. The alliance was close and it was long enduring. It was based, on the Sovereign's part, on no prepossessions. On the contrary, she, more than most, had to overcome prejudices against the alien, against the trespasser upon the enclosure of British politics, against the fiction-writer's appearance upon the stage of fact. The Prince Consort's dislike for him was another bar to his approach to the Queen; and the Court's conversion to the Repeal of the Corn Laws, together with its adhesion to the popular reverence for Peel, produced something approaching a feeling of positive dislike for the stripling David who with a rude sling of speech brought low the Goliath of the Philistines. Little did the Queen imagine in those days that Disraeli was to be more to her than Peel: more to her than even Melbourne, that very fine British gentleman to whom she brought the affectionate homage which the young girl yields



*Photo by J. P. Starling, High Wycombe.*

THE DRAWING-ROOM AT HUGHENDEN MANOR.





to the most accomplished man of the world among her senior friends ; that he was to rank, not merely as her Prime Minister, in the ordinary sense of the term, but as the Prime Minister among all the Ministers of her long reign.

If, when she discovered Disraeli, Queen Victoria had long said good-bye to the last of girlhood's illusions, he himself brought to the association a romance which finds expression at the very end of his life in the letter to Lady Ely, already quoted. It had found early expression when, as a stranger, he wrote of her in his novels. Their careers began together ; Disraeli's in the Commons, hers upon the throne. Lord Lyndhurst, the last of the beaux to sit on the woolsack, gave Disraeli, then on the eve of his own entry to Parliament, an account of the Queen's first Council which is preserved in the familiar passage in *Sybil* :

“In a palace in a garden : meet scene for innocence and youth and beauty, came the voice that told the maiden she must ascend the throne. The Council of England is summoned for the first time within her bowers. There are assembled the prelates and captains and chief men of her realm ; the priests of the religion that consoles, the heroes of the sword that has conquered, the votaries of the craft that has decided the fate of empires ; men grey with thought, and fame, and age ; who are the stewards of divine mysteries, who have

encountered in battle the hosts of Europe, who have toiled in secret cabinets, who have struggled in the less merciful strife of aspiring senates ; men, too, some of them, lords of a thousand vassals and chief proprietors of provinces, yet not one of them whose heart does not at this moment tremble as he awaits the first presence of the maiden who must now ascend her throne. A hum of half-suppressed conversation which would attempt to conceal the excitement which some of the greatest of them have since acknowledged, fills that brilliant assemblage ; that sea of plumes, and glittering stars, and gorgeous dresses. Hush ! the portals open. She comes ! The silence is as deep as that of a noontide forest. Attended for a moment by her Royal mother and the ladies of her Court, who bow and then retire, Victoria ascends her throne ; a girl, alone, and for the first time, amid an assemblage of men. In a sweet and thrilling voice, and with a composed mien which indicates rather the absorbing sense of august duty than an absence of emotion, the Queen announces her accession to the throne of her ancestors, and her humble hope that divine providence will guard over the fulfilment of her lofty trust. The prelates and captains and chief men of her realm then advance to the throne, and kneeling before her, pledge their troth, and take the sacred oaths of allegiance and supremacy—allegiance to one who rules over the land that the great Macedonian could not conquer ; and over a continent of which

even Columbus never dreamed : to the Queen of every sea, and of nations in every zone. It is not of these that I would speak ; but of a nation nearer her footstool, which at this moment looks to her with anxiety, with affection, perhaps with hope. Fair and serene, she has the blood and beauty of the Saxon. Will it be her proud destiny at length to bear relief to suffering millions, and with that soft hand which might inspire troubadours and guerdon knights, break the last links in the chain of Saxon thralldom ? ”

That passage, which gives Queen Victoria her large place, came to her at the time of its publication, discounted by its setting ; for the Chartists were no more to her than merely “wanton and worthless men.” But in later years she re-read it, and with emotion. Disraeli, with his gift of intuitive logic, had seen, perhaps more clearly than she did, the significance of a woman’s reign. Caroline, the mill-hand in *Sybil*, has it in her heart when she says : “It’s fine news for a summer’s day to say we can’t understand politics with a Queen on the throne ! ” And when he put “The Young Queen and the Old Constitution” into the mouth of the Tadpoles and Tapers as an election cry, he did not merely show his talent in burlesque, but proved also his ability to read and to render the note of a nation’s masculinity.

Queen Victoria had the praises of a long line of



Prime Ministers : and they had hers in full return. Readers of her letters know what tributes of grateful affection she paid to Melbourne, Peel, Aberdeen, Palmerston, Wellington, Russell, and Derby while they lived and when they were dead. The dislikes and distrusts with which she had once regarded, say, Palmerston's free hand in foreign policy, were forgotten by her in her memory of general service. But her demonstrations—the word is not too emphatic—in favour of Lord Beaconsfield were of a different sort. They came from the Queen, and they came perhaps from the woman ; so that Mr. Sidney Lee does not exaggerate when he declares that “no Sovereign in the course of English history has given equal proof of attachment to a Minister.”

Yet Queen Victoria's earlier distresses about her Ministers had been largely of Disraeli's causing. The defeat of Peel after Repeal in the summer of 1846—Disraeli's doing more than any other single man's—brought her Majesty “a very hard day.” She says : “I had to part from Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen, who are irreparable losses to us and to the country. They were both so much overcome that it quite upset me. We have in them two devoted friends. We felt so safe with them, and I cannot tell you how sad I am to lose Aberdeen ; you cannot think what a delightful companion he was. The breaking-up of all this intercourse during our journeys



is deplorable." It is characteristic of Sir Robert Peel that when the Queen offered to see him "any day," he drew back, thinking that such a display of favour and familiarity might provoke hostile criticism. Disraeli's method and Peel's were here also at issue ; for Disraeli's plea, even from his pre-Parliamentary days, had been for the open revival of the influence of the first member of the threefold constitutional alliance of King, Lords, and Commons. When Lord Melbourne died, the Queen recurred to the days of a close and even romantic early friendship in terms that are primarily retrospective and official: "Truly and sincerely do I deplore the loss of one who was a most disinterested friend of mine, and most sincerely attached to me. He was indeed, for the first two years and a half of my reign, almost the only friend I had, and I used to see him constantly—daily." She adds: "I thought much and talked much of him all day"—a phrase pregnant of limitations. When she heard that her last letter to her old friend had been "a great comfort and a great relief to him, and that during the last melancholy years of his life we had often been the means of cheering him up," she adds: "This is a great satisfaction for me to hear." The "we" is in evidence. There was the solitary "I" when Lord Beaconsfield was lost. The armour that intimate companionship offers against the assaults of Time was in 1881 no longer hers.

In Disraeli's letters to his sister are hints of his attitude to the Queen and to Prince Albert, discovering him in his familiar capacity of the friendly observer and common-sense judge of persons much less graciously inclined towards himself. Those who remember Queen Victoria only by the later years of her reign may well find it difficult to realise the distrust and the derision with which she was very openly regarded by large bodies of the people during its earlier stages. She was not smart enough for one set; another lamented her absence of taste in the arts; the Prince Consort was tolerated (he was not even that by some of the Queen's nearest relations) rather than approved; while the freedom of his religious opinions alienated the sympathies of the yearly growing multitude that was taking part in the Catholic revival. His influence over the Queen was openly deplored by High Churchmen; nor could pious adherents of the Evangelical party be pleased. "He is everywhere reported to be liberally disposed," wrote Lord Ashley (afterwards "the good" Lord Shaftesbury); "such is the preliminary humbug to his acceptance with the nation." Too much of a cosmopolitan to share these views, Disraeli did not grudge the Prince the hand of the Queen—"remarkably sweet and soft," he reports of it on the authority of Lyndhurst, fresh from the first Privy Council; the hand he was himself to kiss in the years to come;

the hand, too, that was to write with emotion the most poignant of epitaphs for his tomb. When the Commons rushed into the House of Lords for Victoria's opening of her first Parliament, "the Queen looked admirably" is Disraeli's record; and, again, at the Coronation: "The Queen looked very well, and performed her part with great grace and completeness."

In the February of 1840 Disraeli had his first glance at the future Prince Consort: "He is very good-looking," is the report. When members of Parliament went with a marriage address to the Royal pair at Buckingham Palace, Disraeli repeated the compliment: "The Queen looked well; the Prince, on her left, very handsome." Twelve years later, after an interval in which Disraeli had been ignored by the Court, he came, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, at close quarters with Prince Albert. Writing on June 8th, 1852, he says: "On Sunday I was two hours with the Prince—a very gracious and interesting audience. He has great abilities and wonderful knowledge—I think the best educated man I ever met, most completely trained, and not over-educated for his intellect, which is energetic and lively"—a discriminating, as well as friendly, sketch. Eight days later, he wrote from Downing Street—from Downing Street at last: "The Court is very gracious; I was with the Prince Consort again two hours on Sunday



last." The Court was very gracious out of policy—to help itself; it was to end by being very gracious out of its heart, against all its prepossessions, and because it could not help itself.

The Tory party, Peel at their head, was in early conflict with the young Queen. Hard as she found it to part from Peel and Aberdeen in 1846, she had found it harder in 1839 to say good-bye to Melbourne, and to send first for Wellington (who declined the task of forming a Tory Government, believing—like Mr. Labouchere later—its leader should sit with the Commons) and then for Peel. "She observed that she had parted with her late Government with great regret," is Peel's dry report. Then followed the episode that goes by the name of the Bedchamber Plot. The Queen and Sir Robert do not wholly agree in their versions of what passed; but the upshot was that Sir Robert refused office because the principal posts of the Household were filled by friends of the late Administration, who would, he thought, make an impression on the Queen's mind hostile to the successors of their sons, nephews, uncles, and brothers. The Queen stood firm against "a course which," Sir Robert is told, "she conceives to be contrary to usage and which is repugnant to her feelings." After reading a sharp criticism in a Tory paper upon her show of temper, she said: "The Tories do all in their power to make themselves odious



to me." Yet not all of them. The young member for Shrewsbury, though not yet in a position to criticise his leader's attitude publicly, was inwardly dissenting from it. Writing, six years later, in *Sybil*, he quotes some selfish Tory place-hunters about the folly of Peel's refusal of power, and says :

"Perhaps it may be allowed to the impartial pen that traces the memoirs of our times to agree, though for a different reason, with these distinguished followers of Sir Robert Peel. One may be permitted to think that, under all circumstances, he should have taken office in 1839. His withdrawal seems to have been a mistake. In the great heat of Parliamentary faction which had prevailed since 1831, the Royal prerogative, which, unfortunately for the rights and liberties and social welfare of the people, had since 1688 been more or less oppressed, had waned fainter and fainter. A youthful princess on the throne, whose appearance touched the imagination, and to whom her people were generally inclined to ascribe something of that decision of character which becomes those born to command, offered a favourable opportunity to restore the exercise of that regal authority, the usurpation of whose functions has entailed on the people of England so much suffering and so much degradation. It was unfortunate that one who, if any, should have occupied the proud and national position of the leader of the Tory party, the chief

of the people and the champion of the throne, should have commenced his career as Minister under Victoria by an unseemly contrariety to the personal wishes of the Queen. The reaction of public opinion, disgusted with years of Parliamentary tumult and the incoherence of party legislation, the balanced state in the kingdom of political parties themselves, the personal character of the Sovereign—these were all causes which intimated that a movement in favour of the prerogative was at hand. The leader of the Tory party should have vindicated his natural position, and availed himself of the gracious occasion : he missed it ; and as the occasion was inevitable, the Whigs enjoyed its occurrence. And thus England witnessed for the first time the portentous anomaly of the oligarchical or Venetian party, which had in the old days destroyed the free monarchy of England, retaining power merely by the favour of the Court.”

Peel, however, was impenitent. Looking back on the episode, he confirmed his first judgment : “All that has passed since has convinced me that we were right in refusing to accept power on the express condition that the wives, sisters, and daughters of our enemies should hold the chief household offices.” When, in 1840, the question of an annual allowance to Prince Albert came before Parliament, the Whig Ministers proposed the sum of £50,000, whereas Sir Robert Peel supported the amendment to lessen the sum to

£30,000, and carried the reduction by a majority of 104 votes. "This division," he wrote, "will inform the Queen that she must not place too much reliance on the forbearance of the Conservative party." Disraeli voted with Peel ; but against the grain.

With the Irish Church Disestablishment resolutions in 1868 came the decisive change in the attitude of the Queen towards her rival Ministers, Gladstone and Disraeli. "So long as by the favour of the Queen I stand here," was one of the allusions made in Parliament by Disraeli to the sympathy of his Royal mistress. In vain did Bright denounce Disraeli as guilty of treason in thus "parading" the Queen's partiality—a partiality men did not yet realise. Again, when the title of Empress was conferred upon the Queen by her Minister, in consonance with her own convictions and with the long-formed opinions of experts, she saw him baited day after day with an extravagance of prophecy about England's downfall in the East, an extravagance which itself was evidence of the downfall of England in the foresight of her captains. Again there was talk of the impeachment of Disraeli ; and the very elect were taken by the popular clamour. It was Disraeli against the world ; and Time has justified Disraeli. That episode was the beginning of the end of the Queen's confidence in Gladstone ; while, on the other hand, her belief in his rival had passed into the stage of faith.



Various versions, ironic and farcical, of the source and mainstay of that influence of the Minister over his Royal mistress have been hazarded ; some vulgar, some flippant, some offensive. He shook hands with John Brown ; the Highland Journal was entered in the Royal Confession Book as his favourite reading ; he befooled her with flattery—a woman hardened utterly against the flatteries of courtiers. Yet if “ flattery ” is to be the word for “ his profound and admiring regard for women,” we accept at the hand of Lord Esher, then Mr. R. B. Brett, the otherwise unwelcome word. “ Disraeli’s chivalrous devotion to women is abundantly clear from his novels,” Mr. Brett says ; “ what wonder, then, that to Disraeli, a romanticist in statecraft, an idealist in politics, and a Provençal in sentiment, his chivalrous regard for the sex should have taken a deeper complexion when the personage was not merely a woman, but a Queen ? In trifles Disraeli never forgot the sex of the Sovereign. In great affairs he never appeared to remember it. To this extent the charge of flattery brought against him may be true. He approached the Queen with the supreme tact of a man of the world, than which no form of flattery is more subtle.” Disraeli, in short, took the Queen as he found her. In trifles, she tells us somewhere, she felt and showed herself womanish ; in serious crises she was calm. In talking with the Queen, Disraeli—so he told Mr. Brett—had a simple



rule: "I never deny; I never contradict; I sometimes forget"—a rule, one may say, that clamours for very general application among the civilised.

But it was not by any special show of "tact"—nearly as repulsive a thing, if self-conscious, in the social world as Faber found self-conscious "edification" to be in the spiritual—that Disraeli obtained and held his sway over the preferences of his Sovereign. He had a saving sense of humour, and he had for his foil in this respect, during his later years, a rival who had none. The Queen liked to be amused, and Disraeli's flow of shrewd comment on men and matters never failed. "No one, it is certain," says Lady Ponsonby, "ever amused her so much as he did." The Island politician is by common consent a dull creation; and the Queen treated him dully. The bored person is apt to be inconsiderate, even brutal; so that the gouty Minister, afraid to possess his soul, was made to stand after dinner till he dropped—and woe to him if he trenched on the Royal rug! Mental lacqueys may very well be treated as physical lacqueys. Queen Victoria did not put forth the formula; but her practice was such when she permitted to Disraeli, and to Disraeli alone, "a reckless disregard of Court etiquette." Lady Ponsonby illustrates her point:

"He was never in the least shy; he did not trouble to insinuate; he said what he meant in terms the

most surprising, the most unconventional ; and the Queen thought that she had never in her life seen so amusing a person. He gratified her by his bold assumptions of her knowledge, she excused his florid adulation on the ground that it was 'Oriental,' and she was pleased with the audacious way in which he broke through the ice that surrounded her. He would ask across the dinner-table, 'Madam, did Lord Melbourne ever tell your Majesty that you were not to do this or that?' and the Queen would take it as the best of jokes. Those who were present at dinner when Disraeli suddenly proposed the Queen's health as Empress of India, with a little speech as flowery as the oration of a maharajah, used to describe the pretty smiling bow, half a curtsy, which the Queen made him as he sat down. She loved the East, with all its pageantry and all its trappings, and she accepted Disraeli as a picturesque image of it. It is still remembered how much more she used to smile in conversation with him than she did with any other of her Ministers."

The Queen did not keep her partiality to herself or to her more immediate *entourage*. The public may be said to have been taken into confidence even rather defiantly. In 1868, he was consoled for his defeat at the polls by the Queen's wish to give him a signal mark of her approbation, and Mrs. Disraeli became a Viscountess. His own earldom came at

a moment of equally critical contest ; and when her personal presence at the opening of Parliament, or even a visit to Hughenden, could serve his interests, the trouble was not grudged by his Royal mistress. The bunch of roses she sent to Downing Street to welcome him on his arrival from the Berlin Conference was a pledge, to which the rathe primrose was too soon to be a ghostly successor. At the first news of his serious illness she sent to offer that bedside visit upon which his doctors put their veto, believing the strain and emotion of such an interview to be beyond his flickering powers. Daily messages were supplemented by offers of delicacies, some of which he ate, alas ! with no sauce of hunger.

When the end came, her own hand wrote the official notice for the Court Circular : “ The Queen received this morning, with feelings of the deepest sorrow, the sad intelligence of the death of the Earl of Beaconsfield, in which her Majesty lost a most devoted friend and counsellor, and the nation one of its most distinguished statesmen.” The offer of a public funeral in Westminster Abbey, made at once to the executors by Mr. Gladstone, was of her instant prompting ; and a day later, the Court Circular announced that Lord Rowton—he whose peerage was in a sense a link between the Sovereign and the dead Chief—had arrived at Osborne to recount “ the touching details of the last hours of her Majesty’s



valued friend, Lord Beaconsfield." At the graveside at the foot of the green hill at Hughenden were two wreaths, distinguishable from all the rest—one of prim-roses, bearing the legend "His favourite flower," in the Queen's handwriting; and another, on which she wrote: "A mark of true affection, friendship, and respect."

The unfinished picture by Sir John Millais the Queen ordered to be placed in the Academy, though sending-in day was over; and, had she not disliked it, would herself have become its possessor. A little later, Victoria made a pilgrimage to the vault at Hughenden, which was reopened for her, so that she might lay upon the unspeaking coffin with her own hand another wreath. At her special request, on that occasion the Queen travelled the exact route taken by Lord Beaconsfield when last he had passed from Windsor to his own Manor house; and thence she traced to the grave the steps of those who had carried his coffin over that descending track. From her own privy purse she put up a monument to her Minister in his parish church. There at Hughenden, under the profile portrait in marble, appear the lines: "To the dear and honored memory of Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, this memorial is placed by his grateful Sovereign and friend, Victoria R.I. 'Kings love him that speaketh right.'"





*Photo by H. W. Taunt & Co., Oxford.*

*Designed by Richard Bell.*

MEMORIAL IN HUGHENDEN CHURCH,  
Erected to her Favourite Minister by Queen Victoria.

[To face p. 566.



***"I am not Surprised that the  
Ancients Worshipped Trees"***

*To Francis George Heath, in acknowledgment of his  
book on "Peasant Life in the West of England."*

HUGHENDEN MANOR,  
"December 28th, 1880.

"DEAR SIR,—I thank you for the new volume. Your life is occupied by two subjects which always deeply interest me—the condition of our peasantry, and trees.

"Having had some knowledge of the West of England five-and-twenty years ago, I am persuaded of the general accuracy of your reports, both of their previous and their present condition.

"You will remember, however, that the condition of the British peasant has at all times much varied in different parts of the country. Those of this district are well-to-do. Their wages have risen 40 per cent. in my time, and their habitations are wonderfully improved.

"Again, the agricultural population of the North of England, the hinds of Northumberland and the contiguous counties, were always in great advance of the southern peasantry, and, with all our improvements, continue so.

"With regard to your being informed that in many parts of the West of England the peasantry are now starving, I should recommend you to be very strict in your investigation before you adopt

that statement. Where is this? and how, with our present law, could this occur?

“With regard to trees, I passed part of my youth in the shade of Burnham Beeches, and have now the happiness of living amid my own ‘green retreats.’ I am not surprised that the ancients worshipped trees. Lakes and mountains, however glorious for a time, weary ; sylvan scenery never palls.

“Yours faithfully,

“BEACONSFIELD.”

Lord Beaconsfield, in his double capacity of author and statesman, was a sort of Aunt Sally at whose head a multitude of books was discharged. Literary people liked him to see what they said ; political aspirants sought to catch his eye ; and he was not spared theology by divines, nor law-books by lawyers, whose merits he had perhaps some official means of recognising. Young men, calling him “Master,” loved, above all else that authorship might bring them, to place in his hands the writings of which he had been in some sense the inspirer : sometimes he recognised himself at a glance and said, with a smile, that he felt, in all ways, like “a receiver of stolen goods.” In earlier life these tributary volumes went mostly unacknowledged—the effort of writing unnecessary notes, especially in hot weather, became to the busy Parliament man the faggot above a load. Sometimes he met the slighted sender, and was sorry.



In 1849, at a dinner-party at Lord Brougham's ("our host is a host in himself"), was "a young Wellesley, a son of Mornington, but as unlike his father as imaginable, for he was most interesting, thoughtful, highly cultivated, and seemed to me a genius"—a find for a dinner-party indeed! But all was not to be smiling. "He had sent me a French book which he had written, and which, remembering his father's boring brochure, I had never acknowledged; and I felt a pang." He, who often had visited the virtues of fathers on their sons, here unjustly visited a father's sin on a son. In later life, authors sending volumes were not rewarded even by that catchword which is attributed to his "Talk"; a formal note from a secretary was their portion. It is characteristic that when, in the last lonely year of his life at Hughenden, he sent a personal letter of acknowledgment, it was to an author who wrote of sylvan scenery and of that peasantry which had peopled Disraeli's earliest dreams of an England socially regenerate.

The allusion to Burnham Beeches reminds us that in the autumn of 1849 Disraeli, having been at Dropmore, "could not resist stealing on two short miles to Burnham Beeches, which," he tells his sister, "I had not seen for so many years, and saw again under such different circumstances, being their representative.<sup>1</sup> They did not disappoint me, which is saying much."

<sup>1</sup> He had been elected M.P. for Bucks two years earlier.



## APPENDIX

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### *In Memoriam : Isaac Disraeli*

To Lady Blessington Disraeli had written from Hughenden Manor in the January of 1849 :

“I have taken the liberty of telling Moxon to send you a copy of the new edition of the *Curiosities of Literature*, which I have just published, with a little notice of my father. You were always so kind to him, and he entertained such a sincere regard for you, that I thought you would not dislike to have this copy on your shelves.

“I found among his papers some verses which you sent him on his eightieth birthday, which I mean to publish some day, with his correspondence ; but the labour now is too great for my jaded life. My wife complains very much that I broke my promise to her, and did not bring her to pay you a visit when we last passed through town ; but I was as great a sufferer by that omission as herself. The truth is, I am always hurried to death and quite worn out, chiefly by statistics,

though I hope the great Californian discovery,<sup>1</sup> by revolutionising all existing data, will finally blow up these impostures and their votaries of all parties. We have passed the last six weeks in moving from Bradenham to this place—a terrible affair, especially for the library, though only a few miles. I seem to have lived in waggons like a Tartar chief. Would I were really one, but this is a life of trial ; and paradise, I hope, is a land where there are neither towns nor country.

“ D.”

This “little notice of my father ” was produced at a time of great political pressure, on the eve of Disraeli’s succession to the leadership of the Tory Opposition. In May, 1848, he wrote to his sister : “ Moxon has undertaken to see the *Curiosities* through the press. Pray remember to get me all the dates as to publications, etc., all details, etc., in case I am ever destined to write the *Memoir* ” (his father had died two months earlier) “ I contemplated.” Nine months later the *Memoir* was born : “ The new edition of

<sup>1</sup> Of gold. After the “Peace with Honour” Treaty, the British residents in California sent Lord Beaconsfield an address enshrined in a golden casket from the Golden Gate. In reply to the deputation who presented it, he referred to the romance of the incident. “ Here,” he said, “ is a body of Englishman working in the El Dorado, the real El Dorado, they have discovered, pursuing fascinating and absorbing labours, who yet, amid all the excitement of their unparalleled life, can still reflect upon the fortunes of the much-loved country they have quitted for a while.”





*Engraved by Ridley from a Picture by Drummond.*

ISAAC DISRAELI.

After a portrait by Drummond, 1796.

[To face p. 572.]



the *Curiosities*, the first stone in the monument, will appear directly. It is an expensive book, and Moxon looks grave. He likes the *Memoir*, but complains that it is too short. I think, however, he is wrong." An excellent piece of work it is, the first of its kind, but so good as to be scarce improved upon by the Biography of Lord George Bentinck, to follow in four years. Disraeli begins with a brief history of his family and of their sufferings for their faith :

"My grandfather, who became an English denizen in 1748, was an Italian descendant from one of those Hebrew families whom the Inquisition forced to emigrate from the Spanish Peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century, and who found a refuge in the more tolerant territories of the Venetian Republic. His ancestors had dropped their Gothic surname on their settlement in the Terra Firma, and, grateful to the God of Jacob who had sustained them through unprecedented trials and guarded them through unheard-of perils, they assumed the name of Disraeli, a name never borne before, or since, by any other family, in order that their race might be for ever recognised. Undisturbed and unmolested, they flourished as merchants for more than two centuries under the protection of the lion of St. Mark, which was but just, as the patron saint of the Republic was himself a child of Israel. But towards the middle of the eighteenth century, the altered circumstances

of England, favourable, as it was then supposed, to commerce and religious liberty, attracted the attention of my great-grandfather to this island, and he resolved that the youngest of his two sons, Benjamin, the 'son of his right hand,' should settle in a country where the dynasty seemed at length established through the recent failure of Prince Charles Edward, and where public opinion appeared definitely adverse to persecution on matters of creed and conscience. The Jewish families, who were then settled in England, were few, though from their wealth, and other circumstances, they were far from unimportant. They were all of them Sephardim, that is to say, children of Israel, who had never quitted the shores of the Midland Ocean, until Torquemada had driven them from their pleasant residences and rich estates in Arragon, and Andalusia, and Portugal, to seek greater blessings even than a clear atmosphere and a glowing sun, amid the marshes of Holland and the fogs of Britain. Most of these families, who held themselves aloof from the Hebrews of Northern Europe, then only occasionally stealing into England, as from an inferior caste, and whose synagogue was reserved only for Sephardim, are now extinct; while the branch of the great family, which, notwithstanding their own sufferings from prejudice, they had the hardihood to look down upon, have achieved an amount of wealth and consideration which the Sephardim, even with the



patronage of Mr. Pelham, never could have contemplated. Nevertheless, at the time when my grandfather settled in England, and when Mr. Pelham, who was very favourable to the Jews, was Prime Minister, there might be found, among other Jewish families flourishing in this country, the Villa Reals, who brought wealth to these shores almost as great as their name, though that is the second in Portugal, and who have twice allied themselves with the English aristocracy, the Medinas—the Laras, who were our kinsmen—and the Mendez da Costas who, I believe, still exist.”

What Disraeli calls “the disgraceful repeal of the bill”—as disgraceful in its way as the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—perhaps disappointed the elder Benjamin and led to that alienation even from his own people of which his grandson makes a note :

“The tendency to alienation was no doubt subsequently encouraged by his marriage, which took place in 1765. My grandmother, the beautiful daughter of a family who had suffered much from persecution, had imbibed that dislike for her race which the vain are too apt to adopt when they find that they are born to public contempt. The indignant feeling that should be reserved for the persecutor, in the mortification of their disturbed sensibility, is too often visited on the victim ; and

the cause of annoyance is recognised, not in the ignorant malevolence of the powerful, but in the conscientious conviction of the innocent sufferer. Seventeen years, however, elapsed before my grandfather entered into this union, and during that interval he had not been idle. He was only eighteen when he commenced his career, and when a great responsibility devolved upon him. He was not unequal to it. He was a man of ardent character ; sanguine, courageous, speculative, and fortunate ; with a temper which no disappointment could disturb, and a brain, amid reverses, full of resource.<sup>1</sup> He made his fortune in the mid-way of life, and settled near Enfield,<sup>2</sup> where he formed an Italian garden, entertained his friends, played whist with Sir Horace Mann, who was his great acquaintance, and who had known his brother at Venice as a banker, ate macaroni which was dressed by the Venetian Consul, sang canzonettas, and notwithstanding a wife who never pardoned him for his name, and a son who disappointed all his plans, and who to the last hour of his life was an enigma to him, lived till he was nearly ninety, and then died in 1817, in the full enjoyment of prolonged existence.<sup>3</sup> My grandfather retired from active

<sup>1</sup> He was a partner in a firm of fruit importers and had a hand in the founding of the Stock Exchange.

<sup>2</sup> When the house was pulled down, the façade was brought to the South Kensington Museum as a fine specimen of early eighteenth-century English architecture.

<sup>3</sup> Disraeli here considerably antedates the year of his grandfather's death.

business on the eve of that great financial epoch, to grapple with which his talents were well adapted ; and when the wars and loans of the Revolution were about to create those families of millionaires, in which he might probably have enrolled his own. That, however, was not our destiny. My grandfather had only one child, and nature had disqualified him, from his cradle, for the busy pursuits of men."

A Russian loan was in fact offered for his negotiation in 1815 ; he refused it, and it passed to the Rothschilds—hence the allusion to "those families of millionaires." Benjamin Disraeli the Youngest in early life had a brief dream of the political finance of the kind his progenitor had foregone. "In the winter of 1835," says the writer of an article of astonishing Disraeli interest appearing in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1887, "he was concerned in some mysterious financial operation which he considered of great political importance. 'Circumstances,' he wrote to Mr. Austen, 'have placed me behind the curtain of financial politics.' What the precise nature of this operation was, we have been unable to ascertain. It was seemingly connected with the issue of a loan for a foreign Power in Holland, as he informed Mr. Austen that he was in frequent secret communication with the Secretary of the Dutch Legation in London, and twice went over to The Hague in connection with the affair. He was in expectation of making a considerable sum of



money by it, at a moment when he was in serious monetary straits; but it came to nothing, and we merely mention the circumstance as it affords curious evidence that, in his description of Sidonia in *Coningsby*, he had himself in view in that great and all-knowing politician and financier, or that in Sidonia he sketched a character to which it was his ambition to attain. The purchase by him in after-years, when Prime Minister, of the Suez Canal shares, affords a striking instance of his conception of 'financial politics.'” Thus had the houses of Disraeli and Rothschild an association at last. Meanwhile, the story of Isaac Disraeli, no man of mercenary affairs, though the careful steward of the family fortune that passed through his hands, has to be told by his son :

“A pale, pensive child, with large dark brown eyes and flowing hair, had grown up beneath this roof of worldly energy and enjoyment, indicating even in his infancy, by the whole carriage of his life, that he was of a different order from those among whom he lived. Timid, susceptible, lost in reverie, fond of solitude, or seeking no better company than a book, the years had stolen on, till he had arrived at that mournful period of boyhood when eccentricities excite attention and command no sympathy. In the chapter on Pre-disposition, in the most delightful of his works,<sup>1</sup> my

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Literary Character*, vol. i. Chap. V.



father has drawn from his own, though his unacknowledged, feelings, immortal truths. Then commenced the age of domestic criticism. His mother, not incapable of deep affections, but so mortified by her social position that she lived until eighty without indulging in a tender expression, did not recognise in her only offspring a being qualified to control or vanquish his impending fate. His existence only served to swell the aggregate of many humiliating particulars. It was not to her a source of joy, or sympathy, or solace. She foresaw for her child only a future of degradation. Having a strong clear mind, without any imagination, she believed that she beheld an inevitable doom. The tart remark and the contemptuous comment on her part, elicited, on the other, all the irritability of the poetic idiosyncrasy. After frantic ebullitions for which, when the circumstances were analysed by an ordinary mind, there seemed no sufficient cause, my grandfather always interfered to soothe with good-tempered commonplaces, and promote peace. He was a man who thought that the only way to make people happy was to make them a present. He took it for granted that a boy in a passion wanted a toy or a guinea. At a later date, when my father ran away from home, and after some wanderings was brought back, having been found lying on a tombstone in Hackney churchyard, he embraced him and gave him a pony.

“In this state of affairs, being sent to school in

the neighbourhood was a rather agreeable incident. The school was kept by a Scotchman, one Morison, a good man, and not untinctured with scholarship, and it is possible that my father might have reaped some advantage from this change ; but the school was too near home, and his mother, though she tormented his existence, was never content if he were out of her sight. His delicate health was an excuse for converting him, after a short interval, into a day scholar ; then many days of attendance were omitted ; finally, the solitary walk home through Mr. Mellish's park was dangerous to the sensibilities that too often exploded when they encountered on the arrival at the domestic hearth a scene which did not harmonise with the fairy-land of reverie. The crisis arrived when, after months of unusual abstraction and irritability, my father produced a poem. For the first time, my grandfather was seriously alarmed. The loss of one of his argosies, uninsured, could not have filled him with more blank dismay. His idea of a poet was formed from one of the prints of Hogarth hanging in his room, where an unfortunate wight in a garret was inditing an ode to riches, while dunned for his milk-score. Decisive measures were required to eradicate this evil, and to prevent future disgrace—so, as seems the custom when a person is in a scrape, it was resolved that my father should be sent abroad, where a new scene and a new language might divert his mind from the ignominious

pursuit which so fatally attracted him. The unhappy poet was consigned like a bale of goods to my grandfather's correspondent at Amsterdam, who had instructions to place him at some collegium of repute in that city. Here were passed some years not without profit, though his tutor was a great impostor, very neglectful of his pupils, and both unable and disinclined to guide them in severe studies. This preceptor was a man of letters, though a wretched writer, with a good library, and a spirit inflamed with all the philosophy of the eighteenth century, then (1780-1) about to bring forth and bear its long matured fruits. The intelligence and disposition of my father attracted his attention, and rather interested him. He taught his charge little, for he was himself generally occupied in writing bad odes, but he gave him free warren in his library, and before his pupil was fifteen, he had read the works of Voltaire and had dipped into Bayle. Strange that the characteristics of a writer so born and brought up, should have been so essentially English ; not merely from his mastery over our language, but from his keen and profound sympathy with all that concerned the literary and political history of our country at its most important epoch.

“ When he was eighteen he returned to England a disciple of Rousseau. He had exercised his imagination during the voyage in idealising the interview with his mother, which was to be con-



ducted on both sides with sublime pathos. His other parent had frequently visited him during his absence. He was prepared to throw himself on his mother's bosom, to bedew her hand with his tears, and to stop her own with his lips ; but, when he entered, his strange appearance, his gaunt figure, his excited manners, his long hair, and his unfashionable costume, only filled her with a sentiment of tender aversion ; she broke into derisive laughter, and noticing his intolerable garments, she reluctantly lent him her cheek. Whereupon Emile, of course, went into heroics, wept, sobbed, and, finally shut up in his chamber, composed an impassioned epistle. My grandfather, to soothe him, dwelt on the united solicitude of his parents for his welfare, and broke to him their intention, if it were agreeable to him, to place him in the establishment of a great merchant of Bordeaux. My father replied that he had written a poem of considerable length, which he wished to publish, against Commerce, which was the corruptor of man. In eight-and-forty hours confusion again reigned in this household, and all from a want of psychological perception in its master and mistress.

“My father, who had lost the timidity of his childhood, who, by nature, was very impulsive, and indeed endowed with a degree of volatility which is only witnessed in the South of France, and which never deserted him to his last hour, was no longer to be controlled. His conduct was decisive. He



enclosed his poem to Dr. Johnson, with an impassioned statement of his case, complaining, which he ever did, that he had never found a counsellor or literary friend. He left his packet himself at Bolt Court, where he was received by Mr. Francis Barber, the doctor's well-known black servant, and told to call again in a week. Be sure that he was very punctual ; but the packet was returned to him unopened, with a message that the illustrious doctor was too ill to read anything. The unhappy and obscure aspirant, who received this disheartening message, accepted it, in his utter despondency, as a mechanical excuse. But, alas ! the cause was too true ; and a few weeks after, on that bed, beside which the voice of Mr. Burke faltered and the tender spirit of Bennett Langton was ever vigilant, the great soul of Johnson quitted earth.

“ But the spirit of self-confidence, the resolution to struggle against his fate, the paramount desire to find some sympathising sage—some guide, philosopher, and friend—was so strong and rooted in my father, that I observed, a few weeks ago, in a magazine, an original letter, written by him about this time to Dr. Vicesimus Knox, full of high-flown sentiments, reading indeed like a romance of Scudery, and entreating the learned critic to receive him in his family, and give him the advantage of his wisdom, his taste, and his erudition.

“ With a home that ought to have been happy, surrounded with more than comfort, with the most

good-natured father in the world, and an agreeable man, and with a mother whose strong intellect, under ordinary circumstances, might have been of great importance to him, my father, though himself of a very sweet disposition, was most unhappy. His parents looked upon him as moonstruck, while he himself, whatever his aspiration, was conscious that he had done nothing to justify the eccentricity of his course, or the violation of all prudential considerations in which he daily indulged. In these perplexities, the usual alternative was again had recourse to—absence ; he was sent abroad, to travel in France, which the peace then permitted, visit some friends, see Paris, and then proceed to Bordeaux if he felt inclined. My father travelled in France and then proceeded to Paris, where he remained till the eve of great events in that capital. This was a visit recollected with satisfaction. He lived with learned men and moved in vast libraries, and returned in the earlier part of 1788, with some little knowledge of life, and with a considerable quantity of books."

The way of Isaac Disraeli soon became plain ; Pye, the Poet Laureate, visited the paternal house at Enfield and persuaded a reluctant father to allow his son to follow his own bent. The honourable making and keeping of that bargain between father and son was all-essential to the career of Benjamin Disraeli, who profited by his father's position to a degree that

only he himself realised. His father—one of the first members of the Athenæum Club—knew all the literary men of the day; he familiarised the public ear with the alien name; and, if he excited the wrath of a Bolton Corney by what appeared a too great complacency—if he had on a very few occasions the ill-luck to pull out a plum with Jack-Horner-like advertisement of his own discovery, there can be no question about the excellence of those *Curiosities of Literature* which still arouse the curiosity of the reader, instruct him, entertain him, even if they do not extort from him Bulwer's tribute to the "style."

How utterly Disraeli the Younger realised his debt is known to all onlookers. The *Home Letters* are full of it. When he has got only so far as Falmouth on his journey abroad in 1830, he begins to send back messages that must have given Bradenham, and the Man of Letters laboriously at work there, a very happy half-hour. A Mr. Cornish is met at Falmouth who has already an American edition of *Vivian Grey*; "but this is nothing," he adds, racing on to the real thing: "He has every one of my father's works, except *James* and *Charles*, interleaved and full of MS. notes, and very literary ones. He has even the Bowles and Byron controversy all bound up with the review, and a MS. note to prove that Disraeli was the author of the review from parallel passages from the *Quarrels*, etc. He literally knows my



father's works *by heart*, and thinks our revered sire the greatest man that ever lived. He says that Byron got all his literature from Padre, and adduces instances which have even escaped us. You never met such an enthusiastic votary. I really wish my father could send him a book. Unfortunately he has even the *last* edition of the *Literary Character*: he has three or four editions of the *Curiosities*, and among them the first. I told him that when I wrote home I should mention him." Disraeli adds, with a delightful sensation of linking himself with his father: "Really these ardent admirers of the united genius of the family should be encouraged." From Gibraltar he reports that the libraries are stocked with his father's works. At Seville, Brackenbury, the English Consul (and "the father of the six Miss Brackenburys, equally pretty"), describes Disraeli the Younger as "the son of the greatest author in England"; and the news bounds to Bradenham.

So, too, from Alexandria he reports that "Mr. Briggs, the great Egyptian merchant, has written from England to say that great attention is to be paid me, because I am the son of the celebrated author." From Granada the delightful and abundant fruit is reported: "I only wish I had my beloved sire here over a medley of grape and melon and prickly-pear." Spanish cookery takes the traveller's mind back to Bradenham; for the *olio* is italicised





*Alfred Croquis del.*

*D'Israeli*

FROM THE DRAWING BY D. MACLISE, R.A.

[To face p. 586.]



as the most agreeable of dishes, and "my father would delight in it"; while a recipe is sent for a preparation of tomato, "with which I think my father would be charmed." At Alexandria an admirable Oriental dinner "would have delighted my father—rice, spices, pistachio nuts, perfumed *rôtis*, and dazzling confectionery." He awaits news of his father, whose letters, he says, "contribute greatly to my happiness"—happiness even in lazaretto at Malta. It was during this journey that Dizzy met Giovanni Battista Falcieri, Clay's valet—"such a valet!" "Byron died in his arms and his mustachios touch the earth." "Such a valet" had, of course, to be secured for Bradenham, whither Tita, as he was called, went, remaining till Isaac Disraeli's death in 1848; and then, at Benjamin's instance, getting a messenger-ship in the India Office.

Corfu must have gained a new interest for Isaac Disraeli, for it was thence that his son wrote to him not only as "My dearest Father," but also as "My dearest Friend." A cool review of Isaac Disraeli rouses the son: "I saw Lingard's cold-blooded hand at work in the *Monthly*":—an attribution which suggests that the mingled haughtiness and frivolity of Isaac Disraeli's habitual allusions to the Church of Rome—so unlike his son's—had nettled the historian, himself of a particularly liberal turn of mind. The return of health to the traveller is

announced from Cairo in filial fashion—the father is linked with the son in the record of the son's recovery :

“How I long to be with him, dearest of men, flashing our quills together and opening their minds, ‘standing together in our chivalry,’ which we will do now that I have got the use of my brain for the first time in my life.”

Meanwhile he gives his father such co-operation as praise supplies. A favourite puppy at Bradenham dies, and his master writes :

Max, true descendant of Newfoundland race,  
Where once he sported finds his burial-place.  
Vast limbed, his step resounding as he walked,  
The playful puppy like a lion stalked.  
Domestic friend, companion of all hours,  
Our vacant terraces and silent bowers  
No more repeat thy name ; and by this urn  
Not to love dogs too well we sadly learn.

These are the best eight lines in a poem of double the number ; and they are fondled by the absent son :

“The death of Max,” he writes, “has cut me to the heart. The epitaph is charming and worthy of the better days of our poetry. Its classical simplicity, its highly artificial finish (I mean of style), and fine natural burst of feeling at the end





*Photo by H. W. Taunt & Co., Oxford.*

MONUMENT TO ISAAC DISRAELI,  
Erected at Hughenden by Viscountess Beaconsfield.



are remarkable, and what I believe no writer of the day could produce. It is worthy of the best things in the Anthology. It is like an inscription by Sophocles translated by Pope."

If Isaac Disraeli's early verses failed to get appreciation from his father, not so his later verses from his son.

The common courtesies of life were not abrogated by the attachment between father and child. The younger man always remembers he is a guest, as well as an eldest son and heir, at Bradenham. When he proposes to bring Bulwer down, he adds: "I am anxious that he and my father should be better acquainted." If he reads a book with pleasure, he wishes at once to share it: "My father should read Chateaubriand." Then, when he met Beckford, though Beckford was full of *Contarini Fleming*, what Benjamin lays stress on is Beckford's praise for Isaac's Persian romance, *Mejnoun and Leila*. Disraeli did not use the word "educate" with studied effect only in the Edinburgh speech and of the Tory party: "Strangford is educating his second daughter himself, and they read the *Curiosities* every morning." Lord Strangford, another time, is reported as being "very hot against Corney," whose criticisms had upset for the moment the plum-cart of the elder Disraeli. Good points against Corney about Camoens and Cervantes are promised "to the governor"—Disraeli

was in his central thirties when he used the schoolboy phrase. A French *littérateur*, M. le Riou (almost the first person to discuss "the Oxford Tracts" with Disraeli), is labelled for Bradenham as "anxious to know my father"; and Sir Robert Inglis, met at Peel's dinner-table, has his character determined by his requesting "permission to ask after my father." When blindness and other infirmities came to Isaac Disraeli, the son had a constant anxiety.

"Your letter," he wrote in 1839 to his sister, "would have made me very happy had it brought more satisfactory tidings of my father. I had persuaded myself from your account that the enfeebled vision arose merely from bodily health, sedentary habits, etc. We are very uneasy and unhappy about him, and we would take great care of him if he would come up for advice."

The "we" marks that bond of sympathy and affection between Mary Anne Disraeli and the family of her husband, which has at Hughenden its recording monument of stone.



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